

# APOSTLES



BRENDON NAICKER

*To Sophie  
with love.*

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## FOREWORD

As a maverick mission worker, I had the opportunity to work under Brendon's ministry. My wife and I walked the streets of Brendon's community, sharing the message of God's Word, door-to-door. At the home of a persnickety older gentleman, my wife and I soon found ourselves in an excited discussion (this is a nice way of saying, "heated argument"). I will never forget the way that Brendon—an experienced minister—held his knowledge at bay. He allowed two frazzled Americans to face a salvo of theological contentions. With defeat on our mind, Brendon advised us on how to better our approach in the next situation. He *encouraged* our ministry as a married couple. As he writes in the upcoming pages:

*"Christ's authority flows through the mature Christian and others recognise the merit and worth of that authority. Divine authority is never in a hierarchy nor found in an office or position. Its source is the indwelling Spirit."*

Brendon is a practicing advocate of his own teaching. The goal of his ministry is not to climb the "church ladder." He knows who is at work within his family's life, and he knows that the Great Worker did not die so that we could find authority. Christ died so that we can have life and be able to share the message of life to those around us. Brendon's ministry is to *build*—not to build upon his reputation; not to add more designations to his name. I will never forget the way he showed that "indwelling Spirit."

As I listened to his advice that day, I knew I wasn't listening to a preacher. I was listening to a builder. The honest advice he gave me was the very *essence* of ministry. I honestly believe that this spirit is what urged Brendon to create this work. As he discusses the role of apostleship from the days of the Pentecost to the high-profile ministers of today, notice the tone. Notice how badly Brendon rejects contemporary attributions of status within the church.

Most importantly, treat the above quote with the attention it deserves. Whether we call our church leaders “apostles,” “disciples,” “preachers,” or the like, let’s remember why we name our leaders at all. Jesus Christ named his direct followers both “disciples” and “apostles.” These are coveted titles in today’s church, correct? However, the Lord gave special names to men whose *merit* warranted the association. To climb God’s ladder requires such short titles. In fact, don’t the servants achieve the highest rank in His kingdom? This is simplistic—but true. As for the persnickety older gentleman, I have but one desire: I pray that we will meet him On High.

**Shane Gottwals**

Warner Robins, GA, USA

A special thank you to Brendon Naicker, who has diligently argued the biblical exposition on Apostles. This contemporary version is reader friendly, theologically sound and a must for every Christian. It is gratifying to know a new generation of Christians are serious about hermeneutics and are “rightly dividing the Word of truth.” This book is not the Bible but is intended to point you to the Bible. One of the great needs in the church today is to return to the scriptures as the basis of authority. May this book unlock for you the treasures and insights that are found in the Word of God. William Lyon Phelps, called the most beloved professor in America, and one time president of Yale University, made the oft-quoted statement:

**“I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible.”**

It is sad that, although the Bible is an available, open book, it is a closed book to millions. This book *Apostles* will make the reading and study of God’s Word interesting, challenging and inspiring.

I commend it to you for your prayerful study.

**Rev. Clement Joseph**

South Africa

## INTRODUCTION

There is much confusion in the contemporary sphere on the subject of apostles. This is mainly due to the climate of deep disagreement and resentment over some Christian leaders who are acknowledged by many to be modern-day apostles. Paul mentions in Ephesians 4:11-13:

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

Although most Pentecostals refer to these as “five-fold,” others see them as “fourfold,” combining the ministries of pastor and teacher into one. These “ascension gifts”—as they are called in traditional churches—were given to the Church after Jesus ascended to the Father to extend, guide, and mature the Church. We can assume that, at the time Paul wrote, the New Testament church had a clear understanding of what these offices required, how they operated, and who filled them. However, with the passing of time, the role and operation of these ministries in the everyday life of the church became less clear.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Oak Harbour, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Eph 4:11-13.

When considering the five-fold ministries, the average believer can understand that pastors care for their flock, evangelists preach to the unconverted, teachers instruct their students, and prophets prophesy the Word of God. But what do apostles do to show they are apostles? Are there apostles today? This book explores the nature of the apostolic office as revealed in the scripture. It also examines the biblical foundation and contemporary teaching on the nature and ministry of these modern-day apostles. In so doing, it seeks to provide an answer as to the basis for affirming the existence of apostles today.



## DEFINITION AND ORIGIN

The term “apostle” is almost exclusively found in the New Testament, where it occurs seventy-nine times: ten in the Gospels, twenty-eight in Acts, thirty-eight in the Epistles, and three in Revelation.<sup>2</sup> The early Christian title of “apostle”—although well attested in the New Testament and other early Christian sources—presents a number of still unresolved problems. The noun “apostle” or (*apostolos*) in Latin is originally an adjective derived from the verb *apostellō* (“send”), found in the New Testament with a considerable range of meanings. The basic concept is that of sending messengers or envoys; an apostle can also be called *angelos* (“messenger,” e.g. Luke 7:24; 9:52) or *kēru*x (“herald,” e.g. 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; cf. Mark 1:45; 2 Cor 5:20).

Apostles can be human or divine-sent by human or divine authorities. The original adjective *apostolos* is attested only infrequently in Greek literature, referring to an envoy or a bearer of a message in a general sense.<sup>3</sup> This technical meaning conforms to the Aramaic *seliaḥ* (Ezra 7:14; Dan 5:24; cf. 2 Chr 17:7–9).<sup>4</sup> In the Hellenistic Era, the concept of the divine envoy was applied by Epictetus to the ideal cynic,<sup>5</sup> but the term *apostolos* does not occur. Christianity, therefore, appears to have picked a secular term and

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<sup>2</sup> Everett F. Harrison, “Apostle, Apostleship,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1996), 70–72.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 56 e.g., Herodotus 1.21; Plato, *Ep.* 7.346a.

<sup>4</sup> C. Spicq, “Notes de lexicographie néo-testamentaire supplément” in *Orbis biblicus et orientalis* 22/3, (Freiburg: Éditions universitaires; Göttingen, 1982), 54–63.

made it into a specific office and title. There are over 80 occurrences of the Greek word *apostolos* in the New Testament-“to send” in the Lukan and Pauline writings. It derives from the very common verb *apostellō* to send, but in non-Christian Greek, after Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, there are few recorded cases where it means “a person sent.” It generally means “fleet” or perhaps occasionally “admiral.”

The New Testament and the early patristic literature also attempt to define it. Since scholarship is still divided on many of the questions, the following definitions must be seen as part of the argument and not as final answers. The basic definition given by Origen is, “Everyone who is sent by someone is an apostle of the one who sent him.”<sup>6</sup> This concept involves legal and administrative aspects and is basic to all types of representatives, envoys, and ambassadors. Origen’s definition is grounded in the New Testament itself; e.g. John 13:16: “Truly, truly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than the one who sent him” (cf. also Matt 10:40–42; Gal 4:14).

More specific is the definition given in Acts 1:21–22, according to which an apostle must be “one of the men who has accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in David Noel. Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 56 (*Diss.* 3.22.3; 4.8.31).

<sup>6</sup> R. Schnackenburg, “Apostles before and during Paul’s Time” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Gasque and Martin 1970), 287–303 cites (*Jo.* 32.17, Preuschen 1903: 453, line 17).

when he was taken up from us . . .” Paul mentions (2 Cor 12:12; cf. Rom 15:19; Acts 5:12) the practice of the apostle legitimating himself by “the signs of the apostle” (*ta sēmeia tou apostolou*): i.e. “by signs and miracles and wondrous deeds.” In the Petrine traditions, the task of the apostle is seen as transmitting the words of the prophets and of Jesus to the church (2 Pet 3:2; cf. the prophetic function of the apostles in Jude 17).

Paul did not conform to any of these definitions, a fact that explains his position as an outsider and the difficulties he had obtaining recognition.<sup>7</sup> The sense of “sent one, messenger” may have survived in popular speech: at least, isolated occurrences in the Septuagint and Josephus suggest that this meaning was recognised in Jewish circles. Only with Christian literature, however, does it come into its own. In New Testament it is applied to Jesus as the Sent One of God (Heb. 3:1), those sent by God to preach to Israel (Lk. 11:49), and those sent by churches (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). Above all, it is applied absolutely to the group of men who held the supreme dignity in the primitive church.<sup>8</sup> Since *apostellō* seems frequently to mean, “to send with a particular purpose”—as distinct from the neutral *pempō* (save in the Johannine writings, where the two are synonyms)—the force of *apostolos* is probably “one commissioned”—it is implied, by Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> David N. Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 56.

<sup>8</sup> J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology III* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 165.

It is disputed whether *apostolos* represents in New Testament a Jewish term of similar technical force. Rengstorf, in particular, has elaborated the theory that it reflects the Jewish *šāliah*, an accredited representative of religious authority, entrusted with messages and money and empowered to act on behalf of the authority; and Gregory Dix and others have applied ideas and expressions belonging to the *šāliah*, concept (*e.g.* a man's *šāliah* is as himself) to the apostolate and eventually to the modern episcopate.<sup>9</sup> Such a process is full of perils, and not least because there is no clear evidence that *šāliah* was used in this sense until post-apostolic times. *Apostolos*, in fact, may well be the earlier as a technical term, and it is safest to seek its significance in the meaning of *apostellō* and from the contexts of the New Testament occurrences.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. A. Krik, "Apostleship since Rengstorf" in *New Testament Studies*, 21:249–64 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 75.

<sup>10</sup> D. R. W. Wood, and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 50-8.

## THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APOSTLE

When one assembles all the relevant New Testament data, at least three qualifications emerge as prerequisite to one becoming an apostle in the official sense. First, an apostle had to have seen the Lord and been an eyewitness of Christ's resurrection (Acts 1:22; 22:14; 1 Corinthians 9:1). Second, an apostle had to be specifically selected by the Lord or the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Third, an apostle was invested with miraculous power to the extent that he could perform miracles. The power to perform miracles included the capability to confer the ability to work miracles to other individuals through the laying on of his hands.<sup>12</sup> Jesus referred to His bestowal of miraculous capability upon the apostles when He promised they would be "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).<sup>13</sup>

However, the essential qualification of an apostle is the divine call, the commissioning by Christ. In the case of the Twelve, this was given during his earthly ministry. But with Matthias, the sense of the divine commissioning is not less evident: God had already chosen the apostle (Acts 1:24), even though his choice was not yet known. Paul equally insists on his direct commission from Christ (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1, 15). He in no sense derived

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<sup>11</sup> See references: (Matthew 10:5; Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:26; 9:15; 22:14-15,21; 26:16).

<sup>12</sup> See references: (Mark 3:15; 16:17-20; Luke 9:1-2; John 14:12,26; 15:24-27; 16:13; Acts 2:43; 4:29-31,33; 5:12,15-16; 8:14-18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6; Romans 1:11; Hebrews 2:3-4).

<sup>13</sup> These qualifications are discussed in detail by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 92-101, under the chapter title, "*The Name and Office of an Apostle*." See also; Hayden, 1894, 33, expands these credentials to seven in number.

his authority from the other apostles; like Matthias, he was accepted, not appointed by them. He did not fulfil the qualifications of Acts 1:21, but the Damascus Road experience was a resurrection appearance (1 Cor. 15:8), and he could claim to have “seen the Lord” (1 Cor. 9:1); he was thus a witness of the resurrection. He remained conscious that his background—an enemy and persecutor, rather than a disciple—was different from that of the other apostles, but he counts himself with their number and associates them with his own gospel (1 Cor. 15:8–11).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 59.

## THE FUNCTIONS OF THE APOSTOLATE

Mark's first specification on the choice of the Twelve is for them "to be with him" (Mk. 3:14). It is no accident that the watershed of Mark's Gospel is the apostolic confession of the Messiahship of Jesus (Mk. 8:29), or that Matthew follows this with the "Rock" saying about the apostolic confession (Mt. 16:18f). The primary function of the apostles was witness to Christ, and the witness was rooted in years of intimate knowledge, dearly bought experience, and intensive training. This is complementary to their widely recognised function of witness to the resurrection (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 13:31), for the special significance of the resurrection lies not in the event itself, but in its demonstration in fulfilment of prophecy and of the identity of the slain Jesus (*cf.* Acts 2:24- 36; 3:26, Rom. 1:4).

Their witness of the resurrection of Christ made them effective witnesses to his Person, and he himself commissions them to worldwide witness (Acts 1:8). The same commission introduces a factor of profound importance for the apostolate: the coming of the Spirit. Curiously enough, this is most fully treated in John 14–17, which does not use the word "apostle" at all. This is the great commissioning discourse of the Twelve (*apostellō* and *pempō* are used without discrimination): their commission from Jesus is as real as his own from God (Jn. 20:21). They are to bear witness from their long acquaintance with Jesus, yet the Spirit bears witness of him (Jn. 15:26–27).

He will remind them of the words of Jesus (Jn. 14:26), guide them into all the truth (a promise often perverted by extending its primary reference beyond the apostles), and show them the age to come (of the church) and Christ's glory (Jn. 16:13–15). Instances are given in the fourth Gospel of this process, where the significance of words or actions was recalled only after Christ's "glorification" (Jn. 2:22; 12:16; 7:39). That is, the witness of the apostles to Christ is not left to their impressions and recollections but to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whose witness it is also—a fact of consequence in assessing the recorded apostolic witness in the Gospels.

In their own day they were regarded as "pillars" (Gal. 2:9—perhaps translate "marking posts").<sup>15</sup> The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20—probably the witness of the Old Testament is intended, but the point remains if Christian prophets are in mind). The apostles are the assessors at the Messianic judgment (Mt. 19:28), and their names are engraved on the foundation stones of the Holy City (Rev. 21:14). Apostolic doctrine, however originating as it does with the Holy Spirit—is the common witness of the apostles, not the perquisite of any individual. For the common preaching<sup>16</sup> of the Old Testament, the chief apostle could by implication betray a fundamental principle he had accepted and be withstood by a colleague (Gal. 2:11).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> C. K. Barrett, in *Studia Paulina*, 1953, 1ff.

<sup>16</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its developments*, 36

<sup>17</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 98



Healing and other spectacular gifts, such as prophecy and tongues, are abundantly attested in the apostolic church-related, like the apostolic witness, to the special dispensation of the Holy Spirit. They are strangely missing in the 2nd-century church, the writers of those days speaking of them as a thing of the past—in the apostolic age, in fact.<sup>18</sup> Even in the New Testament, we see no signs of these gifts except where apostles have been at work. Even where there has previously been genuine faith, it is only in the presence of apostles that these gifts of the Spirit are showered down (Acts 8:14ff, 19:6—the contexts show that visual and audible phenomena are in question).

By contrast, the New Testament has less to say than might be expected of the apostles as ruling the church. They are the touchstones of doctrine, the purveyors of the authentic tradition about Christ: apostolic delegates visit congregations which reflect new departures for the church (Acts 8:14ff; 11:22ff.). However the Twelve did not appoint the Seven; the crucial Jerusalem Council consisted of a large number of elders as well as the apostles (Acts 15:6, 12, 22) and two apostles served among the “prophets and teachers” of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). Government was a distinct gift (1 Cor. 12:28), normally exercised by local elders; apostles were, by virtue of their commission, mobile. They are not even prominent in the administration of the sacraments (*cf.* 1 Cor.

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<sup>18</sup> J. S. McEwan, “Apostles”, in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7, 1954, 133ff.; See also B. B. Warfield, *Miracles Yesterday and Today*, (Banner of Truth: London, 1967), 53.

1:14). The identity of function which some see between apostle and 2nd-century bishop is by no means obvious.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> K.E Kirk, *The Apostolic Ministry* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946), 10.

## HISTORICAL REFLECTION

Thus, for centuries, the offices of pastor and teacher have been familiar ministries in all churches. However, only since the middle of the nineteenth century, with the success of Charles Finney and other “professional” evangelists of that day, has the office of evangelist gained a popular understanding and acceptance. The offices of apostle and prophet have been more elusive for modern Christians. Many have accepted a belief developed throughout the centuries that the age of the apostles and prophets ended around 96 AD, about the time John, the last apostle, died. Another belief, first stated by St. Augustine (and later retracted), has been widely accepted along with this. It holds that, with the completion of the canon of Scripture, the Lord withdrew miraculous gifts of the Spirit such as tongues, prophecy and healing.<sup>20</sup>

Over time, as the bishops consolidated their power in the church, the office of apostle was almost forgotten. By the second century, apostles and prophets were seen as nothing more than travelling medicine men with little or no influence or authority. In spite of cessationist views and the low esteem shown to those who claimed to be apostles, the idea of an enduring apostleship continued to surface sporadically throughout church history. For example, Mani of Persia (216-274), founder of the Manichee sect, called himself the “Apostle of Light”—the last apostle of Jesus Christ, he said, who would ever appear. Like Mani, whose dualistic religion the

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<sup>20</sup> Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 206.

church rejected as heretical, most people in church history who have claimed to be new apostles have been branded as heretics and excommunicated from the church. (Mohammed also claimed to be the last apostle and prophet for all time.)

Other so-called “end-time apostles,” such as Joseph Smith, have appeared over the centuries and have been rejected. Nevertheless, the question of whether there are contemporary apostles has refused to die. In fact, the modern debate is as lively as ever.<sup>21</sup> Since 1901, despite long-standing cessation theories, Pentecostals and Charismatics have loudly proclaimed that the charismata, or gifts of the Spirit, are a present-day reality in the church. Millions of modern-day Christians speak in tongues, prophesy, cast out demons, and pray for the sick with an expectation of divine healing. These gifts of the Spirit are regarded as part of the modern Christian experience in a large percentage of the churches of Christendom.

The question many Christians are now asking is this: “If the charismata has been restored, why have not the prophets and apostles—those offices that the Lord himself set in the church—also been restored?” As with the gifts of the Spirit, the dispensational limit on the exercise of these offices seems to be more man-made than biblical. Prophecy has been an integral feature of most Pentecostal and charismatic movements through the years. Until recently,

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<sup>21</sup> David Cartledge, *The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Chester Hill, NSW, Australia: Paraclete Institute, 2000). This book traces the evolution of church structure in the Australian Assemblies of God and provides a rationale for these developments.

however, there has been an extreme reluctance to recognise the office of prophet, although some were ordained to the prophetic office in the Latter Rain movement of the late 1940's and 1950's.<sup>22</sup> In the New Testament, a variety of ministers bore the title of apostle:

### **The Unique Apostle - Jesus**

Hebrews 3:1 speaks of Jesus as “the apostle and high priest of our profession.” He, indeed, was one sent on a special mission to save the world. Of course, there will be no other apostle like the Son of God. He is unique and stands alone.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Twelve Apostles**

The Bible seems to place “The Twelve” in a unique category as well. This special group of messengers is without parallel in church history; their unique ministry will never be repeated. Some call these the “apostles of Christ” or the “apostles of the Lamb” because they saw Jesus with their own eyes and were witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:21,22). To these twelve men, Jesus promised a special place in the Kingdom: “You who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).

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<sup>22</sup> Jay Atkinson, “Apostles” in *Latter Rain Page*, see internet source <http://latter-rain.com/index.html> accessed on 26/02/2008.

<sup>23</sup> J. R. Williams, *Renewal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), III, 165.

## **The “Petrine Theory”**

The Petrine theory states that Simon Peter was given a place of primacy among the Twelve; his successors have been the popes. All other bishops are “successors to the apostles” and exercise a magisterial, pastoral, and teaching authority that has been handed down from generation to generation. Thus, in Catholic theology, all ecclesiastical power is derived from prior generations through apostolic succession. There are no apostles as such in succeeding generations, though all authority in the Church stems from apostolic succession. With the exception of the claim to papal authority, this also represents the general belief of the Orthodox churches. Nevertheless, this view has not kept the Catholic Church from recognising apostolic-like ministries over the centuries.<sup>24</sup>

For instance, missionaries who were the first to bring the gospel to a new people group have been called “apostles” to that group. Thus, Augustine of Canterbury is called the “Apostle to England,” and St. Patrick is called the “Apostle to Ireland.” This tradition is as old as Paul, who called himself “an Apostle to the Gentiles.” Over the centuries, there have been thousands of these “apostles to [(whatever locale)].” Even today, some conduct apostolic ministry among remote tribes and peoples. The Protestant Reformers rejected the Catholic view of apostolic succession and busied themselves with the new movement they founded. Most believed that the office of apostle had ended with the Early Church,

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<sup>24</sup> Peter N. Stearns, *The Encyclopedia of World History: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 67.

with no “successors” as in the Catholic tradition.<sup>25</sup> Some Reformers, such as John Calvin, thought that apostles might reappear under certain circumstances.

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin wrote that the Lord “now and again revives them [(apostles, prophets and evangelists)] as the need of the times demands.” These offices, however, have no place in “duly-constituted churches,” he added. In a similar vein, Luther believed “the apostolic message rather than the office” would remain in the church. A little-known instance of Protestants sending out “apostles” as missionaries occurred among the Baptists in Colonial America. For a time, Baptists in New England ordained “apostles” as missionaries to such southern colonies as Virginia, Carolina and Georgia. After some time, however, the term “apostle” was dropped for the more traditional term “missionary.”

In general, Protestants have been prone to refer to founders of movements and doctrinal systems as “apostles of” certain movements or theological views.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Luther is often called the “Apostle of the Reformation,” or the “Apostle of Justification by Faith.” Similarly, Calvin has been called the “Apostle of Reformed Christianity,” while Wesley is known as the “Apostle of Methodism.” Every denomination seems to have an “apostle” who

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<sup>25</sup> Dave Merck, *Church History* (Grand Rapids: MI, Reformed Baptist Church, 2004) 37-9.

<sup>26</sup> James A. Wiley, *The History of Protestantism* (London: Longmans, Green, 1877), 77.

served as the founder of the ecclesial body, usually based on a new and unique teaching from Scripture.

### **The Restorationist Movement**

In the nineteenth century, a “Restorationist movement” began in Britain with the avowed purpose of restoring all aspects of New Testament Christianity to the modern church. Lewis Way, John Nelson Darby, Edward Irving, and others pioneered a restoration of the charismata (such as *glossolalia* and prophecy). The movement culminated in the creation of the Catholic Apostolic Church in 1832.<sup>27</sup> In addition to the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, the church attempted to restore the five-fold ministries, including the office of apostle. In due time, the church ordained twelve “apostles” who were to be the end-times equivalent of the Twelve chosen by Christ. According to their prophecies, this group would be the last apostles to exist before the rapture of the church.<sup>28</sup>

Eventually, however, these apostles died. When the last one died in 1901, the British church collapsed and practically disappeared. Only in Germany were new apostles ordained to succeed those who had passed away. This church took the name “New Apostolic Church” and is today the third largest body of Christians in Germany (after the Catholic and Lutheran churches). Another sad case of a modern “apostle” who went over the hill was

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<sup>27</sup> James E. Worsfold, *The Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain: With a Breviate of Its Early Missionary Endeavours* (Wellington, New Zealand: Julian Literature Trust, 1991), 110.

<sup>28</sup> James Bales, *The Kingdom: Prophesied and Established* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1957), 208-10.



Alexander Dowie, who claimed the titles of “apostle” and “Elijah the restorer” just before sinking into dementia. The earliest name chosen by the Pentecostal movement in America was “Apostolic Faith,” a designation given by Charles Parham to his church in Topeka, Kansas. It was here, in 1901 that modern Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in other tongues, began. Parham’s student, William J. Seymour, chose the same name for his Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906.

### **The Apostolic Faith**

In this context, “Apostolic Faith” did not signal a move to restore the office of apostle to the church. Parham, in fact, was extremely critical of any kind of church government, especially a highly centralised system with apostolic authority. Yet, there are those who refer to him as the “Apostle of Pentecost.” In the years that followed the glory days at Azusa Street, Pentecostal missionaries travelled around the world preaching the “latter rain” message of a mighty “Holy Ghost outpouring” that would occur before the Second Coming of Christ. A new generation of Pentecostal “apostles” appeared. They included G.B. Cashwell, the “Apostle to the south”; T.B. Barratt, the “Apostle to Europe”; W.C. Hoover, the “Apostle to Chile”; Ivan Voronaev, the “Apostle to the Slavs” and Luigi Francescon, the “Apostle to Italy.” Other early Pentecostal groups claimed to restore the office of apostle to the church. These included “apostolic churches” in Wales, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and

the United States, in which “apostles” were duly-elected and ordained along with any other office in the church.

Some of these continue to this day, with colleges of apostles (usually twelve) that govern their denominations. The “New Order of the Latter Rain movement” of the late 1940’s also popularised the restoration of the “five-fold ministries” in preparation for the revelation of the “Manifested Sons Company.” They claimed, would rule and reign at the end of the Church Age.<sup>29</sup> Prominent among this elite group would be prophets and apostles. Overall, however, Pentecostals have been far more interested in restoring the charismata than in restoring any type of ecclesiastical offices to the church. In the words of David du Plessis, “Pentecostals are more interested in apostolic success rather than in apostolic succession.”

### **The Independent Charismatic Views**

Many independent charismatics have developed a thirst for the restoration of apostolic authority in the body of Christ. They have produced vast sums of tapes and books that assert the five-fold ministry must be restored in power to the modern church. Indeed, many contemporary leaders freely claim to be “apostles.” Some even have the title printed on their stationery and business cards. In general, charismatics have defined apostolic ministry as applying to any one who has a trans-local ministry, usually leaving the pastorate to itinerate in a teaching or church-planting ministry.

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<sup>29</sup> Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 126.

## **The New Apostolic Reformation**

In the last decade, Peter Wagner has led the “New Apostolic Reformation movement,” which he claims is now sweeping the world as the new way leaders are “doing church.” This movement came out of the “National Symposium on the Post-Denominational Church,” a conference Wagner led at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1996. After years of studying church growth in the “Post-Modern Age,” Wagner concluded that the day of the historic denomination was rapidly coming to a close while a new generation of “post-denominational churches was dawning. Before the conference could convene, however, many critics of the idea, including Jack Hayford, forced Wagner to choose a new name. He finally settled on the term “New Apostolic Churches” to describe what he called a “New Testament model of leadership” or “new wineskins for a new Church Age.” many think these churches are new which are really “pre-denominational movements.”

In his book, *The New Apostolic Churches*, Wagner listed eighteen pastors (or “apostles”) who represented the new movement. Of these, only Bill Hybels, Michael Fletcher, and David Kim do not appear to have Pentecostal or charismatic backgrounds. Most, such as Billy Joe Daugherty, Roberts Liardon, and William Kumuyi are openly Pentecostal or charismatic. Others have been part of the Pentecostal/charismatic renewal for years. Clearly most of the “New Apostolic Churches” have their roots in classical Pentecostalism.

In 1999, Wagner attempted to organise the movement into an umbrella grouping under the name “International Coalition of Apostles,” with Wagner listed as the “Presiding Apostle.” New “apostles” could join and pay \$69 per month membership dues. Wagner listed the many types of “apostles” who could be members; they included “Vertical apostles,” which incorporated “ecclesiastical, functional, apostolic team members, and congregational apostles”; “Horizontal apostles,” which included: “convening, ambassadorial, mobilising, and territorial apostles”; “Marketplace apostles,” (undefined); “Calling apostles,” which are those who call Christians together in unity by 2004. In his book, *Aftershock! How the Second Apostolic Age is Changing the Church*, Wagner made grandiose claims about this new movement, claiming that the charismatic movement was “a vision unfulfilled” and that the new “apostolic renewal” movement had taken its place as the wave of the future.

Since almost all of them operate in the gifts of the Spirit, it seems that most of these networks were planted and inspired by the Pentecostal/charismatic movement in the first place. David Barrett previously listed most of them as “denominational Pentecostals” until his New World Christian Encyclopaedia designated them as “neo-charismatic.” Rather than being part of a “New Apostolic Reformation,” most of them are actually part of the “Pentecostal/charismatic Reformation.” It seems that Wagner has tried to impose a new title for movements that were already dynamic

churches originally inspired by the Pentecostals and to create an artificial apostolic structure with himself as “Presiding Apostle.” Although they claim to be only “apostolic networks,” they are rapidly organising and developing structures under their claim of apostolic authority.

## BIBLICAL REFLECTION

### Types of Apostles

Hunter makes the rather startling claim that; “we may now claim to understand them (i.e. the parables) better than any Christians since the Apostolic Age.”<sup>30</sup> This comment is quoted because exactly the same thing may be said about our understanding of apostles in the New Testament.<sup>31</sup> Very early in Christian history the idea prevailed that the twelve plus Paul were apostles-no one else-since an encounter with the risen Christ was essential to be an apostle, this ministry was limited to the first generation of Christians. It is, however, a far too limited view of what constitutes an apostle for, as we will see, the New Testament presents a much more varied and dynamic picture.

### Jesus the Archetypal Apostle

Only once in the New Testament is Jesus explicitly called “*Apostolos*” and that is in the epistles to the Hebrews (3:1).<sup>32</sup> This title may, however, reflect something of Jesus’ own understanding of his person and mission. Thus, in the Gospel of John, on some forty-one occasions, Jesus speaks of being “sent”<sup>33</sup> by God. Rengstorf goes so far as to say that in this Gospel Jesus’ relationship to the Father is

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<sup>30</sup> A. M. Hunter, *The Parables Then and Now* (London: SCM, 1971), 17.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 9

<sup>32</sup> Justin Later, *First Apology* 12:9, 63:5 also calls Jesus *apostolos*.

<sup>33</sup> *apostellein* is used 17 times, and *pempein* 24 times of this sending. The two verbs are synonyms in John. See L. Morris, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 230, note 78.

“very largely governed by the verb “*apostolein*”.”<sup>34</sup> John speaks of Jesus in this way to stress that his authority is grounded in the Father who participates in his mission (5:36; 6:57). The corollary to this argument is that, “He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him” (5:23 cf. 15:23).

This language takes up the Jewish idea that, “the one sent by a man is as the man himself.”<sup>35</sup> In Hebrew, as it has been frequently noted, the term for one officially sent as a representative is *shaliach* which is rendered in Greek by the word *apostolos*. This means that in John, Jesus is presented as the authoritative representative of God himself who speaks and acts on his behalf.<sup>36</sup> These ideas are a development on what is found in the Synoptic Gospels but here emphasis is placed on the sending of the son by the Father and on his authoritative, representative role.<sup>37</sup> When Jesus departs from Capernaum he explains his actions by saying, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also; for I was sent

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<sup>34</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey and William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vols. 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 443.

<sup>35</sup> Ber. 5:5. Cited from Rengstorf’s article, *Ibid*, 415. The argument, given classic expression by Rengstorf, that the NT use of the title apostle is to be explained in some measure in terms of the Jewish *shaliach* institution has been sometimes abused and often criticised. On this debate see J. A. Kirk, “Apostleship since Rengstorf,” in *NTS*, 21, 1975, 249-64. With Kirk we agree that the parallels are useful so long as it is seen that the two institutions are analogous and not identical.

<sup>36</sup> The fact that John is aware of “the full identity” between the words *apostolos* and *shaliach* is seen in John 13:16. So Rengstorf, *Ibid*, 421.

<sup>37</sup> C. G. Kruse, *New Testament Foundations for Ministry* (London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1982), 13-23.

[(*apestalen*)] for this purpose” (Lk. 4:43; Mk. 1:38).<sup>38</sup> In his sermon at Nazareth Jesus applies the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-2 to himself.

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ... he has sent me [(*aposteilai*)] to proclaim release to the captives” (Lk.4:18). Later in his ministry, when speaking to the Syrophoenician women, he says, “I was sent [(*apestalen*)] only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt. 15:24). And finally, in the parable of the wicked husbandmen (which can be found in all three Synoptic Gospels), Jesus, it would seem, alludes to his mission when he speaks of the Father sending his Son (Mk. 12:1-11). The Jewish idea that a man’s officially appointed representative (*shaliach*) stands in his place is also used in the Synoptics to explain Jesus’ own authority and that of his disciples.

In his mission charge Jesus says to his disciples, “He who receives you receives me and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Mt. 10:40 cf. Lk. 10:16). Similarly, in response to the disciples’ debate about greatness, Jesus says, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me and whoever receives me receives not me but him who sent me (Mk. 9:37 cf. Lk. 9:37; Mt. 18:5). These twin themes found in John and the Synoptics suggest that Jesus was deeply conscious that he had been “sent” by God and

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<sup>38</sup> Kruse, *Ibid*, 14-15 points out that whereas Mk. 1:38 only suggests that Jesus “came out” from God this is explicitly stated in Lk. 4:43. The repeated use of the verb in these passages in John and the Synoptic is interesting in the light of the fact that it has often been argued that the NT use of *apostolos* is derived not from the Hebrew but from a unique development of the cognate verb *apostellein*. So H. Mosbech, “Apostolos in the New Testament”, in *St. Theol.*, 2, 1948, 166; L. Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Chapman, 1967), 120 et al. These opinions on how the word *apostolos* came to be used in the NT need not be exclusive solutions for both could have been influential.



that he was God's authoritative representative. They also invite the conclusion that Jesus be recognised as God's *shaliach* (God's apostle). Jesus does not explicitly claim this title but the Gospels only imply that he fulfilled this role.

### **The Twelve**

The first surprise when approaching the Gospels is the discovery of just how infrequently the term "apostle" is used as a title for the twelve. It appears only once in Matthew and Mark, not at all in John and five times in Luke.<sup>39</sup> At the very least the implication would seem that the term "apostle" was not the usual designation Jesus gave the twelve. Many scholars, in fact, argue that Jesus did not at any time call the twelve "apostles" during his lifetime.<sup>40</sup> The Gospel of Mark, which is widely held to be the earliest Gospel, virtually restricts the term "disciple" to the twelve and often speaks simply of the "The Twelve" as if this was quite sufficient as a title for the innermost circle of Jesus' followers.<sup>41</sup>

In the one place the word "apostle" appears (Mk. 6:30), its force is much disputed. In Mark 6:7, Jesus is said to have called to

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<sup>39</sup> The word appears a sixth time in Luke 11:49 but it is uncertain whom Luke is here speaking about. The reference may be to OT messengers. Cf. Matt. 23:34, which has prophets, wise men and scribes.

I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 502-506. It is also used in John 13:16 but not specifically of the twelve-see note 9 above.

<sup>40</sup> W. Schmithals, op. cit. 98-110.

<sup>41</sup> This limited use of the term disciple for those who actually accompanied Jesus is quite Jewish. The disciples of the Rabbis were always a small and defined group although others might be listeners. The evidence that Mark understood that the twelve and the twelve alone bore the title disciple is clearly set out in R. P. Meye, *Jesus and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) passim and in S. Freyne, *The Twelve Disciples and Apostles* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 23-24.

him the twelve and sent (*apostellein*) them out two-by-two. Later, Mark tells us they returned and told Jesus what “they had done and taught” (6:30). This time, Mark uses the noun “*apostoloi*” which is translated into English as “apostle” but it has often been argued that in this context it means little more than “those who had been sent, returned.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, it is not really used as a title. Furthermore, the word is not placed on the lips of Jesus. It is a Markan editorial comment, states Taylor.<sup>43</sup>

In reply, however, we need to note that those whom Jesus sent out were given “authority” (6:7) and entrusted with furthering the mission of Jesus by preaching, healing, and exorcising. It would seem, therefore, that in the context of this limited mission, Jesus may well have used the word “*shaliach*” and Mark accurately reflects this fact.<sup>44</sup> As we have just noted in Mark, “the disciples” and “the twelve” are often used as synonyms but Matthew’s distinctive title for Jesus’ closest followers is “the twelve disciples.” The word “disciple” in Matthew (as in Mark) is never used for a large group and is almost always restricted to The Twelve.<sup>45</sup> Just once Matthew introduces the title, “the twelve apostles” (Mt. 10:2).

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<sup>42</sup> Barrett, op. cit., 29; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 318.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, *Ibid*, 319.

<sup>44</sup> Barrett, op. cit, 69; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Cambridge: C.U.P, 1963), 214.

<sup>45</sup> See Meye, op. cit, 24, 151-172. The particular terminology adopted by each of the three Synoptic evangelists for the inner circle of disciples is illustrated by comparing the parallel texts, Mk. 14:17 = Matt. 26:20 = Lk. 22:14 which read in order “the twelve”, “the twelve disciples”, “the apostles.”

Again the word “apostle” is not put on the lips of Jesus and Matthew may be simply saying, by way of editorial comment, “the names of [(those who later would be known as)] the twelve apostles are . . .” The context, however, is once again the mission of Jesus and so Matthew may also be using the term, on this one occasion, deliberately.<sup>46</sup> In words, which so clearly reflect the representative role of the *shaliach*, (which we have already noted), Jesus says to the twelve, “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Mt. 10:40). Luke’s use of the term “the disciples” stands in marked contrast to what we have just observed in Mark and Matthew. He speaks explicitly of many disciples. Once he refers to “a great crowd of his [(Jesus’s)] disciples” (6:17) and at another time to “the whole multitude of disciples” (19:37).

A comparison between Luke and Mark’s account of the choice of the twelve highlights the differences. In Mark 3:13-19, the twelve are chosen from an anonymous group; whereas, in Luke 6:12f, “the twelve apostles” are chosen from among Jesus’ “disciples.” We thus have in Luke *two* separate groups who are followers of Jesus: the many “disciples” and the twelve “apostles.” This change is more one of terminology than anything else, for all the Gospels allow for an inner circle around Jesus as well as an outer one. The question, however, must be asked: “Did Luke introduce the

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<sup>46</sup> They are to go only to the house of Israel and they are to preach saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 10:6-7).

title “apostle” in his role as editor of the various historical sources he used,<sup>47</sup> or was it there already?”

In most instances, a good case can be made for the argument that Luke *did* add the word<sup>48</sup>-since he believed it was an appropriate title for the twelve but at least once he took it over from Mark, states Lightfoot. (Lk. 9:10; Mk. 6:30) where we have argued it may well reflect something of Jesus’ own understanding of the twelve on mission. However, this mission we need to remember-was of limited duration and only to the house of Israel (Mt. 10:6).<sup>49</sup> It was after the resurrection, according to Matthew and Luke, that Jesus commissioned his closest companions for a more permanent and universal mission.<sup>50</sup> It was this momentous sending forth that earned those whom he had previously called his “disciples” the title “apostle.” John stands somewhat apart from the Synoptic Gospels in his treatment of the disciples. Four times he speaks of the twelve<sup>51</sup>, which shows that he knew of the extent of Jesus’ closest followers; but nowhere does he call them apostles. On one matter, he agrees with Luke.

Marshall, too, uses the term “disciple” quite freely. It is a designation that he can use even of those who follow for a while and

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<sup>47</sup> Lk.1:1-4.

<sup>48</sup> The reason is that when a Lukan passage has a Markan parallel the word does not appear there. See Lk. 6:13, Mk. 3:14, Lk. 22:14, Mk. 14:17.

<sup>49</sup> R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel* (Oxford: O.V.P, 1956), 68-73.

<sup>50</sup> Matt. 28:16-20, Lk. 24:36--53, Acts 1:6-11, John 20:19-23. On these commissioning scenes see J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 138f.

<sup>51</sup> 6:67, 70, 71; 20:24.

then fall away (John 6:60-66).<sup>52</sup> We can conclude, then, from our brief survey of the Gospels, that it would seem most likely that Jesus himself usually referred to his closest followers as his “disciples” or as “the twelve” (in this latter case, the word “disciples” was taken as understood). The selection of this limited group, twelve in number, almost certainly has symbolic implications. They were to be seen as the nucleus of a restored Israel gathered around the Messiah.<sup>53</sup> If Jesus did use the title “apostle” in its Hebrew or Aramaic form during his ministry, it would have been used at the time of the mission of the twelve, but it finds its appropriate context after the resurrection when the risen Christ commissions his constant followers as heralds and witnesses of the resurrection.

It must be noted that “the twelve” were specifically chosen by Jesus during his earthly ministry and that they had all been with him from the beginning of his ministry. We note also that after the death of Judas Iscariot, Matthias was chosen as his replacement and not as his successor (Acts 1:24). Thus, the number of apostles chosen by Jesus was again complete, and this completeness in number is confirmed by the fact that when James was put to death by Herod (Acts 12:1-2), there is no record that a successor was appointed to take his place. Based on this unique and unrepeatable nature,

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<sup>52</sup> I. H. Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (London: Epworth, 1969), 179.

<sup>53</sup> The only place that some explicit reflection on this fact can be seen in the Gospel is Matt. 19:28, Lk. 22:29-30.

Williams argues that succession or restoration of the apostleship “is out of the question.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Paul**

In regard to apostleship, the most immediate impression we gain on reading Paul’s epistles is his own overwhelming certainty that he is an apostle.<sup>55</sup> He does not withhold this title from others, but he sees his own position as in some way exceptional. Surprisingly, he does not mention any of the twelve save Peter and nowhere does he explicitly speak of the twelve apostles. In fact, it has been argued that Paul does not know of the apostleship of the twelve.<sup>56</sup> However, this is probably too dogmatic a conclusion notes Kirk.<sup>57</sup> We cannot say he did not know of the apostleship of the twelve but we *can* say he says little or nothing *about* it. Two passages shed some light on this question-but both are difficult.

In 1Cor 15:5-6, Paul recounts the tradition he had received about the resurrection appearances. He says, “Jesus appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren... then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all ...he appeared to me.” The passage explicitly singles out the twelve as a special group but are we meant to understand that they were called “apostles”? Opinion is quite divided

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<sup>54</sup> R. Williams, *Renewal Theology, III* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 167.

<sup>55</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 92-101, under the chapter title, “*The Name and Office of an Apostle.*”

<sup>56</sup> C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, 38-9; W. Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 73-95, et al.

<sup>57</sup> J. A. Kirk, *op. cit.*, 256-8.

and no agreed answer is possible.<sup>58</sup> The second passage is only slightly more helpful. In Galatians 1:17, Paul speaks of “those who were apostles before me” at Jerusalem. As he seems to understand that this group is of limited number, it may well be that he has the twelve in mind plus James<sup>59</sup> (1:19 cf. 1 Cor. 15:7) but, again, certainty is not possible. Not here or elsewhere does he speak explicitly of “the twelve apostles.” We can, however, be quite certain that Paul recognises a large number of people as apostles. In 1 Corinthians 15:5-6, Paul says that Christ appeared to the twelve, James, and “all the apostles.”

Twice, Paul disparagingly speaks of certain men as “superlative apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11) and once of “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13). The criticism is not that they call themselves apostles but that what they preach is not the true Gospel. In 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11, apostles are said to be ministries given to the Church. The first passage certainly-and probably the second also-does not allow for any circumscription in the number of apostles. The Spirit will raise up those whom he wills for this ministry. There is some debate as to whom Paul explicitly names as apostles, and the contenders for the title can be listed in two categories: the certain and the probable.

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<sup>58</sup> See the discussions in Barrett, 39; Schmithals, 73-9 and Kirk, 256-7.

<sup>59</sup> The allusion is to a group of apostles in Jerusalem the number of which is not stated and it would seem to include James who was not one of the twelve!

In the first list we have Paul himself, Peter,<sup>60</sup> and Barnabas.<sup>61</sup> In the second we have James,<sup>62</sup> Junia and Andronicus,<sup>63</sup> Silvanus,<sup>64</sup> Timothy,<sup>65</sup> Sosthenes,<sup>66</sup> and Apollos.<sup>67</sup> That “the apostles” are not a closed and universally known group in the Pauline churches is also evidenced by the fact that frequently Paul has to contend for his right to call himself an “apostle.” He is absolutely convinced that he is an apostle on the basis of the call and commission of the risen Christ,<sup>68</sup> but others question his claim.

Foremost in Paul’s mind in regard to his own apostleship is the divine initiative. He has been “called to be an apostle” and “set apart for the Gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1), not by men, but by “Jesus Christ and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1). But what, then, are the criteria by which a person may rightly claim to be an apostle? Several

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<sup>60</sup> Gal. 1:18-19

<sup>61</sup> 1 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:9. See D. W. B. Robinson, “Apostleship and Apostolic Succession,” *RTR*, 13, 1954, 35.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Cor. 15:7, Gal. 1:9. In support of James’ apostleship, see J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Macmillan, London 1890), 84, 95. Schmithals, op. cit., 64–5, argues that Paul is deliberately ambiguous on the issue in Gal. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Rom. 16:7. See below in our discussion of women apostles. W. Schmithals, op. cit., 62. Takes these two as amongst those “certainly” recognised by Paul as apostles.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6. So D. W. B. Robinson, op. cit., 38-9; R. Schnackenburg, “Apostles Before and During Paul’s Time”, in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin (Paternoster, Exeter 1970), 295.

<sup>65</sup> 1 Thess. 1:1, 2:6, 2 Cor. 1:1. So Robinson, 36; Schnackenburg, 295.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Cor. 1:1. So Robinson, 39.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Cor. 4:6, 9. So Robinson, 37; Schnackenburg, 295.

<sup>68</sup> Paul sees his own apostleship as unique but this does not lead him to deny the title to some others who are associated with him in the Gentile mission. So Robinson, 39 and Schnackenburg, 295, 301. When Paul says that Christ appeared to him “last of all” (1 Cor. 15:8) he is only referring to resurrection appearances. If such an experience is not demanded of all apostles (see below), it cannot exclude from apostleship those who have been called to the ministry in some other way. Acts 13:1-3 could suggest another way a person might be called to be an apostle.



qualifications are mentioned. To have seen the risen Lord was considered to be foundational to Paul's own claim, and it was obviously very important in the minds of many others. But to have seen the resurrected Lord was not enough (Paul does not imply that the 500 were all apostles, cf. 1 Cor 15:6), nor was it absolutely necessary for everyone who claimed the name "apostle." It is nowhere argued that Barnabas, Junia and Andronicus, Silvanus, Timothy or Apollos had seen the Lord.<sup>69</sup>

Furthermore, 1Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 do not list qualifications for those whom the Spirit will raise up as apostles; the implication is that the Spirit can empower any Christian for this work.<sup>70</sup> To have brought a church into existence is another qualification Paul mentions. In arguing for his right to be called an apostle in, 1Cor. 9:1, Paul not only appeals to his vision of the risen Christ but also to the fact that the Corinthians were his "Workmanship in the Lord." Paul underlines the importance of this in the following sentence: "If to others I am not an apostle [(i.e., if they reject me as an apostle)], at least I am one to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord (1Cor. 9:2; cf. 1Cor. 3:1-2; 2Cor. 12:11)."<sup>71</sup> But to be a pioneer evangelist is not sufficient in itself. A genuine apostle must proclaim the one true Gospel. In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12 Paul assails some who call themselves

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<sup>69</sup> Schnackenburg, 295ff. It is possible that this is the case for some of these people but it is not possible in regard to Timothy and Apollos.

<sup>70</sup> Schnackenburg, 299.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 292-3; C. K. Barrett, op. cit, 41.

“apostles” not for calling themselves “apostles,” nor for lack of a personal commission from the “risen Christ” (which he could have if this was foundational), but because they preached another gospel.<sup>72</sup>

The same argument appears in Galatians 1:6f although here we are not told that “the different Gospel” claimed to be apostles. Just once Paul speaks of “the signs of a true apostle” (2Cor. 12:12). The context is one in which Paul is contending with those Corinthians who thought that an apostle should be a more impressive figure than he was. A true apostle-they seem to have argued-should be able to boast of visions and miracles. Paul’s reply is that he has known these things, but for him the more important “signs of a true Apostle” are sufferings endured in the service of Christ (2Cor. 11:16-33; 1Cor. 4:8-13).<sup>73</sup>

So far we have been speaking of the qualifications of what Paul would call “apostles for Christ,” but twice he speaks of “apostles of the churches” (2Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). These men-the contexts demonstrate-are not missionaries but church envoys commissioned for a specific task of limited duration.<sup>74</sup> The significance of these references is that they bear witness to yet one more usage of the term “apostle” in the New Testament period. These “apostles” are not sent out by the risen Christ nor are they charismatic pioneer evangelists, but they are simply church

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<sup>72</sup> On this point see D. W. B. Robinson, *op. cit.*, 53.

<sup>73</sup> C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, 42-3. He concludes his discussion of this point by stating, “Paul’s theology bears the stamp of the Cross and so does his apostolic ministry”, 43.

<sup>74</sup> The background to this usage is the Jewish concept of the *shaliach*. It is used here without its specifically Christian content.

messengers. We may conclude, then, that Paul viewed his own apostleship as quite unique, but he allowed that others also could be called “apostles of Christ.” These other apostles were Spirit-empowered pioneer missionaries who preached the Gospel faithfully at some personal cost. Paul’s lofty view of his own apostleship rests on his never-fading awareness that the risen Christ appeared to him personally and sent him out to preach the Gospel to the Gentile world.

### **Paul’s Recognition of Other Apostles**

Whom else did Paul recognise as valid apostles? Did he use the word in different senses? By what criteria did he recognise apostles? We now turn to these questions. As we do so, it will prove helpful to bear in mind the statements of Schmithals, that “Paul knows only of a single apostolic circle, which means that early Christianity possessed only one apostolate,”<sup>75</sup> and of Kirk, who believes that “the New Testament writers in fact present only one view of apostleship, in different forms according to different circumstances.”<sup>76</sup> Are these statements true? We begin with a consideration of those who have a claim to be named as apostles by Paul. Of these, Barnabas, Silas, and Apollos are regarded by Ellis as occupying a distinctive position: “None of these persons, at least in Paul’s letters, is presented as

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<sup>75</sup> Schmithals, *Office*, 88.

<sup>76</sup> J A Kirk, “Apostleship since Rengstorf”, in *NTS* 21 (1974/5) 261.

being under Paul's authority, and it may be significant that all of them are termed apostles."<sup>77</sup>

### **Barnabas**

We have already seen that according to Galatians 2:9 Barnabas, as well as Paul, was given the right hand of fellowship by the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church, with a view to going "to the nations." From 1 Corinthians 9:1-6 it seems clear that Paul was content to give the title "apostle" to Barnabas. In verse 1, he speaks of having seen Jesus (surely a reference to his "Damascus Road Experience") and of his church-planting work in Corinth as marks of his apostleship. In verse 5, he mentions "the other apostles," who, together with the brothers of the Lord and Cephas, are accompanied by "a sister as wife"<sup>78</sup> on their travels. It is in this context of apostleship that he mentions Barnabas in verse 6 as one who, like himself, worked for a living during his travels.

The reference to Barnabas is important insofar as the evidence suggests that they had not worked together for some time (Acts 15:39).<sup>79</sup> Clearly, Barnabas was continuing to pursue his apostolic calling.<sup>80</sup> Holmberg surmises that "the reference to

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<sup>77</sup> E. E. Ellis, "Paul and his co-workers", in *NTS* 17 (1970/11) 439; cf B Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 61.

<sup>78</sup> Probably to be interpreted as "a believing wife."

<sup>79</sup> Barrett's conjecture that 1 Cor 9:6 is "evidence that he (ie Barnabas) rejoined the Pauline mission" is unfounded (1 *Corinthians*, 204). If he had done so, there would surely have been other references to him in the Pauline corpus; (though cf Col 4: 10).

<sup>80</sup> Barnabas is also called an apostle by Clement of Alexandria (Strom It 6:31; in 7.35 he is called an apostle and numbered among the seventy disciples), Lightfoot believed that "the apostleship of Barnabas is beyond question", *Galatians*, 96.

Barnabas, a person known and respected in Jerusalem, Antioch and also in the Pauline churches, is not made merely to gain esteem by association, but above all in order to connect Paul's abstention from his rights with a practice common to all apostles to the Gentiles, this is by no means certain."<sup>81</sup>

### **Silvanus /Silas**

Silvanus is mentioned by Paul together with Timothy in 2 Corinthians 1:19, and in the superscriptions of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. It is clear from these verses that Silvanus had preached to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians in company with Paul. (There is common agreement that he is to be identified with the Silas of Acts 15-18.) He is always mentioned before Timothy and thus would seem to be of superior status to him (Acts 15:22,32). In 1 Thessalonians 2:7, Paul writes, "we might have made demands as apostles of Christ." The question arises as to whether or not he regarded Silvanus and Timothy as apostles of Christ. Askwith argues, "there is a very good case for interpreting "we" when it occurs in the Pauline Epistles, as a proper plural."<sup>82</sup>

Lofthouse agrees with Askwith<sup>83</sup> but points out that in 1 Thessalonians "he speaks of the trio as he could hardly have spoken of himself without ostentation . . . There is nothing self-assertive,

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<sup>81</sup> Holmberg, Paul, 65.

<sup>82</sup> E.H Askwith, "I" and "We" in the Thessalonian Epistles', *Expositor* 8 (1911) 153.

<sup>83</sup> W F Lofthouse, "I" and "We" in the Pauline Epistles', *BT* 6 (1955) 80: "It would appear that in Paul's use of the singular and plural there is neither caprice nor carelessness. When he says "I" he means "I".

nothing that does not suit the little band of evangelists as a whole.<sup>84</sup> Bruce translates *αποστολος* 1 Thessalonians 2:7 as “messengers”, believing that “the word is used in a rather general sense: Paul associates his companions with his apostolic ministry-in, which indeed they shared.”<sup>85</sup> Best persuasively argues that “at this stage on the second journey he may not have formulated fully his own position as an apostle as he did later in 1 Cor 9:1, 15:5ff, 2 Cor 10:13, and therefore may have been able to consider Silas and Timothy as apostles alongside himself.”<sup>86</sup>

The doubt concerning whether Paul later recognises Silas and Timothy as full “apostles of Christ” emerges-as Lightfoot argued long ago<sup>87</sup>-because Paul clearly distinguishes between himself as an “apostle” and Timothy as a “brother” in 2Corinthians 1:1 and Colossians 1:1. Elsewhere, where Paul links Timothy's name with his own, he drops the title of “apostle” (e.g. Philippians 1:1 “Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ”). Bruce argues that the term “apostle” “can scarcely be stretched to include Timothy, his own “son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2), whatever may be said of Silvanus.”<sup>88</sup> As regards Silvanus, it must be said that there is no evidence that he worked as an apostle independently. It is possible that he eventually became the co-worker of Peter and cooperated in the writing of 1

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>85</sup> F.F Bruce, “1 and 2 Thessalonians”, in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books, 1982) 31.

<sup>86</sup> E. Best, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 100.

<sup>87</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 96 n 2.

<sup>88</sup> Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 31.

Peter, but his identification with the Silvanus of 1 Peter 5:12 must remain uncertain.<sup>89</sup>

### **Apollos**

In 1 Corinthians 4:9, as we have seen, Paul speaks of “us apostles.” It is possible to argue that Paul has Apollos in view, in the light of the reference to him in 4:6 and in 3:4ff, 22. This, however, seems unlikely. A study of the whole context, (especially verses 14ff), shows that “he is thinking specially of his own position.”<sup>90</sup> There is no evidence that Apollos experienced any of the suffering referred to in verses 10-13. If he has any particular individuals in mind, they are more likely to be Silvanus<sup>91</sup> and Timothy<sup>92</sup> who had shared his sufferings in the church-planting work. Cephas might also qualify, as one known to the Corinthians. But on the whole, it seems likely that Paul has apostles as a class in mind rather than any particular individuals.

Apollos is regarded by him as an apostle seems probable in view of the clear distinction made in 1 Corinthians 3:6, 10 between his own work as a “planter” and “skilled master-builder” who has laid a foundation, and that of Apollos, who is a “waterer”, one who builds on the foundation. Paul is fully conscious that he has received a special commission from God for his work (1 Cor 3:10), but

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<sup>89</sup> E.G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1947), 9-17.

<sup>90</sup> Lofthouse, “I” and “We”, BT (1955) 75.

<sup>91</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 96 n 2.

<sup>92</sup> J Murphy O'Connor, “Tradition and Redaction in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7”, in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, (1981) 589, 43.

nothing similar is said of Apollos. Lightfoot notes that Apollos is distinctly excluded from the apostolate by Clement of Rome (*I Clement* 47), whom he describes as “a contemporary” who “probably knew him.”<sup>93</sup> That he knew Paul is far from certain, however. Ellis, notes “Paul and Apollos always appear to work independently”<sup>94</sup> (cf 1 Cor 16:11f; Titus 3:13).

### **Andronicus and Junia(s)**

The reference in Romans 16:7 to these two individuals is of the greatest importance. Although it is just possible to translate “outstanding in the eyes of the apostles”, it is much more natural to translate it as “outstanding among the apostles.” Cranfield regards this latter translation as “virtually certain” and notes that this was the way it was taken by all known patristic commentators.<sup>95</sup> In such a case, it must be recognised that Paul acknowledged a sizeable group as apostles, not merely the two mentioned by name in Romans 16:7. Research of Patristic and Medieval commentaries has shown, interestingly enough, that this commonly held modern idea was assumed by no commentator before the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

The early commentators on the epistle to the Romans all accept that Paul here speaks of Junia, a woman apostle.<sup>96</sup> We cannot be certain, but it is possible that Andronicus and Junia were husband

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<sup>93</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 96 n 2.

<sup>94</sup> Ellis, “Paul” in *NTS* (1970/1) 439.

<sup>95</sup> Cranfield, *Romans* 2.789.

<sup>96</sup> B. Brooten, “Junia ... Outstanding Among the Apostles (Romans 16:7)”; in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, ed. L. A. Swidler (Paulist Press, New York 1977), 141-3.



and wife working together as missionaries, like Aquila and Prisca. Their pre-eminence, Dodd conjectures, may even arise because “they had some hand in founding the Church of Rome.”<sup>97</sup> Schulz<sup>98</sup> and Broston<sup>99</sup> have shown that all the Church Fathers who quote this text or comment upon it give the name of either Junia or Julia (a minority).<sup>100</sup> Moreover, “from the time accents were added to the text until the early decades of this century Greek New Testaments printed the acute accent indicating a word of the first declension which is predominantly the feminine declension.”<sup>101</sup>

If taken as masculine with an acute accent, we would be left with Junias, a name otherwise entirely unknown; whereas Junia is a common Roman female name. The circumflex accent would require a contracted, masculine form of the first declension, a very rare form. Moreover, if taken as a familiar or endearing form of a longer Latin name, the problem arises that “Latin names of endearment normally lengthen rather than shorten.”<sup>102</sup> Junia is, therefore, by far the most likely alternative. Cranfield’s suggestion that “most probably Andronicus and Junia were husband and wife”<sup>103</sup> is very likely to be

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<sup>97</sup> Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Collins, 1959), 241.

<sup>98</sup> R. R. Schulz, “Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?”, in *ET*, 98 No 4 (Jan 1987), 108-110.

<sup>99</sup> B. Broston, “Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles” in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, ed L and A Swidler (New York: Paulist, 1977), 141-144.

<sup>100</sup> Which is found in the very early P46 manuscript, but is otherwise very poorly supported. This reading is probably due to a clerical error.

<sup>101</sup> Schulz, “Romans 16:7”, in *ET*, (Jan 1987) 109.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

<sup>103</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 2. 788.

correct. For a woman to work on her own as an apostle-given first century cultural attitudes-would have been virtually impossible. The question remains as to the sense in which “apostle” should be understood.

Murray suggests that if they are to be regarded as apostles at all, which he notes as improbable, the word “apostle” is “used in a more general sense of messenger (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25).”<sup>104</sup> In light of the fact that they have shared one of Paul’s imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23), however, it is more likely that they were itinerant missionaries.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, it is difficult to conceive of a class of “messengers” among whom Andronicus and Junia were outstanding. The word *συγγενής* are probably to be understood as “fellow countrymen”, i.e. Jews, as in Romans 9:3).<sup>106</sup> That they were “in Christ” before Paul leaves open the possibility that they may have seen the risen Christ. The almost casual way in which they are introduced in the middle of a greetings list, however, suggests that they did not possess great authority in the church.<sup>107</sup> Schmithals,

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<sup>104</sup> J Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 2.230.

<sup>105</sup> For hypotheses connecting them with the foundation of the Ephesian or Roman see B W Bacon, *ET* 42 (1930/1) 300ff, and G A Barton, *ET* 43 (1931/2).

<sup>106</sup> In Rom 16:17-21 six persons are called *συγγενής*. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St Paul* (London: SPCK, 1907), 176 ff, infers membership of the same Tarsian civic tribe, but this is unlikely.

<sup>107</sup> The Greek word is *Jounian*. It can be read as the accusative of the feminine *Jounia* or as a contraction of the masculine *Jounianus*. The NIV translates “*Junias*” which is probably the short form of “*Junianus*” hence masculine, while the KJV on the other hand translates “*Junia*,” hence feminine. See Lightfoot, op. cit., 96, note 1; Robinson, op. cit., 38; Cranfield, op. cit., 789; W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 423.

who takes Rom. 16:7 as one of the certain texts which name apostles other than Paul says, “this translation... is the only natural one.”<sup>108</sup>

### **“The Other Apostles”**

In the light of the foregoing conclusions, it is likely that Paul’s reference in 1Corinthians 9:5 to “other apostles” should be understood as a reference to a class of itinerant missionaries. They are distinguished both from “the brothers of the Lord” (et Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55) and from “Cephas” i.e. Peter. The fact that they are associated with major figures in the church suggests that they have status and importance (1 Cor 12:28). The fact that Cephas is distinguished from them makes it unlikely that they were, or (included), the twelve.<sup>109</sup>

### **Apostles of the Churches**

From the context in Philippians 2:25 it is clear that this should be translated “your messenger” and that Epaphroditus was an authorised agent of the Philippians, sent to minister to and to help Paul. There is no record of his doing any missionary work. Similarly, in 2Corinthians 8:23 the reference to “my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers” two brethren who are agents of the churches. This is expressly stated of one of them in 8:19; although he is a famous preacher (8:18), his role in this case is clearly that of ensuring that

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<sup>108</sup> Op. cit, 62.

<sup>109</sup> A Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), 1.404.

the collection for the church at Jerusalem is rightly administered. The other brother (8:22)-who has often been tested-is clearly chosen for the same task because of his proven faithfulness. Paul praises these two highly as “the glory of Christ” (8:23), but there is no indication that he regards them as missionaries or apostles in their own right.

### **James**

It was argued above that the reference to “those who were apostles before me” in Galatians 1:17 must refer, at least primarily, to the twelve. Should the statement be translated “the only other apostle I saw (apart from Cephas) was James” or “I saw none of the other apostles, but I did see James” or “Apart from the apostles, I saw no-one but James”?<sup>110</sup> The third possibility has been effectively removed by Howard who has argued that if Paul had wished to say this, he would have expressed himself differently.<sup>111</sup>

It should be noticed that James clearly held pre-eminence in the Jerusalem church after AD 44 (et Acts 12:17, 21:18 and the order of the names in Gal 2:9). There is no evidence, apart from the reference in 1 Corinthians 9:5 to “the brothers of the Lord,” that he ever engaged in missionary work; in light of his responsibilities in Jerusalem, this seems unlikely. He clearly sent out delegates to different churches, however (Gal 2:12).

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<sup>110</sup> L.P.Trudinger, “James”, in *Nov T* 17 (1975), 200-202.

<sup>111</sup> G. F. Howard, “Was James an Apostle?”, in *Nov T* 19 (1977), 63f.

## All the Apostles

The meaning of this phrase in 1 Corinthians 15:7 is difficult to determine. Bruce has argued that if in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 Paul “links the appearance to Cephas with a following appearance to “the twelve” (to whose number Cephas belonged), his linking of the appearance to James with a following appearance to “all the apostles” suggests that he included James among “all the apostles”.”<sup>112</sup>

First, as Godet argued, “the expression “all the apostles” does not naturally express the idea of a circle larger than the twelve.”<sup>113</sup> The emphasis is on a strictly limited circle, whereas other Pauline references to apostles in the sense of itinerant missionaries (Rom 16:7) give the impression of an open, large group. Second, if it is accepted that here we are dealing with a piece of early tradition, it seems doubtful that the word “apostle” in the sense of “itinerant missionary” would have become embodied in a fundamental statement of beliefs at such an early stage in the church’s life. If the reference here is to “the twelve” and James, as seems likely,<sup>114</sup> it is necessary to ask whether or not Paul regarded it as a necessary

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<sup>112</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 101. Barrett, *I Corinthians*, 343. He regards this conclusion as “uncertain.”

<sup>113</sup> The assessment given here, though supported by some older scholars (e.g. Harnack) goes against the position held by most modern scholars. The explanation of the fact that in other places (e.g., probably, 1 Cor 9:5) Paul uses the word in a wider sense, whereas here the sense is narrower, may be accounted for by the fact that Paul is dependent on tradition here.

<sup>114</sup> H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 23. “The decisive factor is the encounter with the Risen Lord, which was frequently both experienced and understood as a special call or commission.”

condition of apostleship (including the sense of “itinerant missionary”) to have seen the risen Christ.

On the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:7f and 1 Corinthians 9:1, this question is frequently answered in the affirmative.<sup>115</sup> Kirsopp Lake has argued, however, that the disagreement that Paul “thought that an apostle needed to have seen the Lord is a rather rash conclusion from 1Cor 9:1... “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” are three separate claims to distinction, and it is an exaggeration to say that Paul only regarded as “apostles” those who had seen Jesus.”<sup>116</sup> It is of course *possible* that Barnabas, whom Luke records as a member of the primitive community (Acts 4:36f), Silas, who likewise was one of the “leading men among the brethren” of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22), and Andronicus and Junia, who were “in Christ” before Paul (Rom 16:7), had seen and been commissioned by the risen Lord.<sup>117</sup> It is dangerous, however, to build too much on arguments from silence.<sup>118</sup> It seems safer, then, to see a commissioning by the risen Lord as essential to those “who had been constituted by him public witnesses

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<sup>115</sup> K Lake, *Beginnings*, Vol. II (London: MacMillan, 1972), 50f. 402n 1. Similarly, Harnack argues that one cannot prove from 1 Cor 9:1 that one must have seen the risen Lord in order to be an apostle. “The four statements are in an ascending series. . . It is clear that the third and fourth statements are meant to attest the second, but it is doubtful if they contain an attestation which is absolutely necessary.”

<sup>116</sup> Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 98.

<sup>117</sup> For a typical example of such an argument, c.f. von Campenhausen, “The apostles are thus the plenipotentiaries of their heavenly Lord, and their authority. . . is based in *all probability* on a call by the risen Christ himself,” *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 22.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

to his resurrection”<sup>119</sup> and hence enjoyed substantial authority<sup>120</sup> in the church, a group seemingly confined to the twelve, James and Paul, but not to those itinerant missionaries who were also known as apostles.

### **Women Apostles?**

The whole question of women’s ministry is a pressing contemporary issue and many have argued, the fact that the twelve were all men. This is of great significance to the present debate. By historical necessity, the twelve apostles had to be men. If they were to be seen as the counterparts of the twelve patriarchs, maleness was of the essence of their role. However, since this typological role was a once-for-all thing, it is hard to see how any inference can be drawn for any other ministry. It should be added also that, in the male-dominated Jewish Society of Jesus’ day, the law excluded women as witnesses. It was thought that their testimony was worthless.<sup>121</sup>

For this reason also the twelve apostles had to be men. But, despite the cultural depreciation of women in Jewish society, the

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<sup>119</sup> On Paul’s view of his authority as an apostle, cf J Goldingay, *Authority and Ministry* (Bramcote Nottingham: Grove Books, 1987), 14, 17; D Cameron, “Authority in the Church-New Testament Period”, in *Churchman* 95 (1981) 27.

<sup>120</sup> Pace, e.g., J D G Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 273f. Sees only two senses. Dunn is typical in this of many modern scholars. Compare, however, the wise comments of C K Barrett: “Does Paul use the word “apostle” in a third sense, to denote a body of men who were more than church messengers but less than apostles such as himself and Peter? What were Andronicus and Junias? . . . When the whole Pauline evidence is reviewed, it is much easier to establish the two extremes apostles of Christ Jesus, such as Paul himself and Peter, and envoys of the church than

to pick out a clearly defined intermediate category”, *Signs*, 46f.

<sup>121</sup> The Rabbis had concluded from Gen. 18:15 that all women were liars while Josephus says, “let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.” See E. Hill, *Women and Their Ministry* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1977), 24 and note 20.

synoptic authors agree that it was women who first found the empty tomb and Matthew and John record that Jesus appeared first to women. The encounter between the risen Christ and the women is drawn as a commissioning scene.<sup>122</sup> The Lord says, “Go and tell my brethren” (Matt. 28:10 cf. John 20:17). The women are chosen and commissioned by the risen Christ to be the first to proclaim the fact, “He is risen.” Brown believes that it was John’s intent to give “a quasi-apostolic role” to these women.<sup>123</sup>

Taking up Pauline qualifications for apostleship, John shows that the women fulfil the two chief requirements. They have seen the risen Christ and they are sent forth by him.<sup>124</sup> (Here we need to remember that John never calls the twelve “apostles.”) Brown also refers to the meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4. Here he sees the fourth Evangelist giving to this woman apostolic missionary status. She is depicted as the founder of the Samaritan Church.<sup>125</sup> In this narrative, he says, we have, “the most important use of the verb *apostellein* in John (4:38)”<sup>126</sup> as well as and the comment that the male Samaritans believed because of the woman’s witness (4:39).

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<sup>122</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, op. cit., 128.

<sup>123</sup> Raymond Brown, “Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel”, in *Theol. St* ,36, 688-99; 60.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 692.

<sup>125</sup> R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (London: Doubleday, 1971), vol. 1, xciv.

<sup>126</sup> “Roles”, 691. Brown believes John intends it to be understood that “the women’s role is an essential component in the total mission although John 4:37 speaks only of the male disciples being *sent* to harvest.”



## Summary

Contrary to the views of Schmithals and Kirk (as above), it may be suggested that Paul did use the word “apostle” in at least three different senses.<sup>127</sup> He spoke of those with special authority to witness to the risen Christ, of itinerant missionaries, church-planters such as Andronicus and Junia, and of church delegates who were not (at least, not primarily) missionaries. It may also be suggested that Paul saw Peter (Cephas) and himself as a bridge between the first two classes of “apostle.” on the one hand, they were both specially commissioned representatives of the risen Lord with divinely given authority and leaders of the respective “apostleship” (missions to Israel and the Gentiles) on the other. Other readings of the evidence are possible, but this understanding has most to commend it.

## The Rest of the New Testament

In 1 Peter 1:1 the author calls himself an “apostle” but nothing is said of the basis or nature of this claim. Jude 1:17 and 2 Peter 3:2 seem to reflect more the Lukan understanding of apostleship, for we may take it that these two references speak of “the twelve” as apostles in a somewhat exclusive sense.<sup>128</sup> The book of Revelation, on the other hand, allows for a two-fold use of the term. In Rev. 21:14, the twelve apostles are seen to be foundational in the establishment of the New Jerusalem but in Rev. 18:20 and 2:2, the term “apostle” is used much more widely. The first reference reflects 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11

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<sup>127</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 275

<sup>128</sup> C. K. Barrett, *op. cit.*, 58-9.

in speaking of “apostles and prophets.” The second suggests that there were many who travelled around claiming to be Christian apostles; sometimes, as in this case, the claim was quite false.

## THE POST-NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS

Little uniformity in usage of the term “apostle” can be found in the immediate post-New Testament writings.

*“Those influenced by the tradition that the twelve were apostles par excellence reflect this idea and those influenced by the Pauline epistles reflect the thought that the apostles were quite a large group.”*

But often both ideas can be found in the one piece of literature without comment<sup>129</sup> a thing we have seen already in the New Testament.<sup>130</sup> Hermas suggests that this larger group of apostles numbered forty,<sup>131</sup> several others mention the number seventy or seventy-two<sup>132</sup> while Eusebius, explaining 1 Corinthians 15:7, speaks of “numberless apostles” besides the twelve.<sup>133</sup> These writers usually take it that all these apostles were commissioned by the risen Christ, but occasionally the view that an apostle was a pioneer missionary also appears. In *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*-or as it is more commonly named *The Didache*-the twelve are given pre-eminence as the title shows, but at the same time the term “apostle” is used simply of itinerant Spirit-led missionaries (*Did*, 11:4-6). The same

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<sup>129</sup> Lightfoot, op. cit., 99-100. His discussion of the use of the title apostle in the post-apostolic writings is still probably the best. See, however, also Schmithals, op. cit., 231ff; L. Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times* (London: A. & C. Black, 1970), 178-82 et al.

<sup>130</sup> E.g. in Acts and Revelation.

<sup>131</sup> *Sim.* 9:15:6. Cf. *Vis.* 3:5, *Sim.* 9:25.

<sup>132</sup> Iren. *Against Heresies* 2:21:1; Tert, *Against Marcion*, 4:24 and quite frequently in the Ancient Syriac Documents. See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, no date, ed. A. C. Fox), 651ff.

<sup>133</sup> *Ecc. Hist.* 1:12. Quoted from K. Lake, *Loeb Classical Library* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1959). Origen also understands that the term apostle is capable of very wide application (*Commentary on John*, Chapter 4).

usage of the term is also found in Pseudo Clement, *Horn.* 11:35 and Hermas, *Sim.* 11:15:4.<sup>134</sup> Various people are called apostles in the Patristic writings. Not only the twelve, and Paul and James, but also Barnabas,<sup>135</sup> Apollos,<sup>136</sup> Philip,<sup>137</sup> Sosthenes<sup>138</sup> and Clement of Rome.<sup>139</sup>

One of the most interesting is Thecla. In the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which was widely read in the second century, we meet Thecla, a fearless woman evangelist and companion of Paul who is called an “apostle.”<sup>140</sup> In this period, the thought that the twelve went out to the whole world preaching the Gospel began to emerge. It is first enunciated in 1 *Clement* and is very prominent in the writings of Justin.<sup>141</sup> By the time *The Acts of Thomas* was written, this tradition was full blown. Here we read of Thomas’ recollection of how “we [(the twelve apostles)] portioned out the regions of the world in order that each one of us might go to

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<sup>134</sup> Von Campenhausen, op. cit., 23 and note 59. On Hermas see note 72 above for the comparative references.

<sup>135</sup> Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 1:12:1.

<sup>136</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2. See Lightfoot, op. cit., 100, note 2.

<sup>137</sup> For details see Lightfoot, op. cit., note 3.

<sup>138</sup> Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 1:12-1.

<sup>139</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2. See Lightfoot, op. cit., 100, note 2.

<sup>140</sup> The text of this work is found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8, op. cit., 487-92. See also E. M. Howe, “Interpretations of Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla”, in *Pauline Studies*, ed. D. A. Hagner and J. M. Harris (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 33-49. She argues that the author of this work validates Thecla’s ministry by depicting her in male categories.

<sup>141</sup> Details are given on Justin in W. Schmithals, op. cit., 535. Similarly, see Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 2:3:1f, 3:1:6.

the region that fell to him... By lot, then India fell to Judas Thomas...<sup>142</sup>

Gradually, however, the twelve and Paul came to be seen more and more as “the apostles.” Wherever Pauline epistles were known, Paul was either named along with the twelve or the twelve apostles were spoken of without any intent to exclude Paul from this select circle. It was only when Marcion and later Jewish Christians began to play Paul *against* the twelve that deliberate thought was given to the number of the apostles. The conclusion that emerged was that only the twelve and Paul qualified for this title.<sup>143</sup> The more general usage then fell into disuse-even disapprobation-and only appeared when used almost metaphorically of those who pioneered the evangelisation of some country or region. Thus we hear of Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, or of Augustine, the apostle of England, or Cyril and Methodius, the apostles of the Slavs.

### **I Clement**

This epistle by Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, probably written about AD 96-100, clearly speaks of the apostles in terms of the twelve. In section 42: “If they are said to have been commissioned by Christ, and to have had their doubts set at rest by the resurrection.” In section 47.4 Paul is said to be, together with Peter, an apostle of the highest repute, but the title is denied to Apollos. In section 44:1, the apostles are said to have appointed bishops and deacons.

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<sup>142</sup> Goppelt, op. cit., p.181 and note 10.

<sup>143</sup> This is brought out most strongly by Luke. On this theme see F. Hahn et al., *The Beginnings of the Church in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1970), passim

## **Ignatius of Antioch**

Ignatius, though highly conscious of his authority and status, makes clear the fact that he does not regard himself as an apostle: “I am not issuing orders to you, as though I were a Peter or Paul. They were Apostles and I am a condemned prisoner.”<sup>144</sup> In *Philadelphians* 5:3, he speaks of himself as clinging to “the Apostles as the collective ministry of the church,” an unclear reference. He has nothing to say about apostolic succession, though twelve times in his letters he speaks of the three orders of ministry-(viz bishop, presbyters and deacons). The reference in *Smyrnaeans* 12:2 to “Burrhus, whom you and brethren of Ephesus have jointly sent as a companion for me,” reminds us of “the apostles of the churches” in Philippians 2:25 and 2 Corinthians 8:23. But Burrhus is not given such a title by Ignatius.

## **Polycarp**

The *Epistle of Polycarp*, bishop of Smyrna, to the Philippians, speaks of “the Apostles who brought us the Gospel” (6:3). The reference seems to be a narrow one, since in 9:2 he speaks of “Paul himself and the other Apostles” as men who are now with the Lord. Irenaeus tells us that the youthful Polycarp had been “instructed by apostles and had had friendly association with many who had seen Christ” (Haer 3:3, 4).

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<sup>144</sup> *Romans* 4:3 (*Trallians* 3:4), Translation by M Staniforth, *Writings*, 104f. Harnack claims that the fact Ignatius disclaims apostolic dignity for himself is nevertheless “a proof that there was a possibility of one who had not been an original apostle being nonetheless an apostle”, *Expansion*, 408 n 1. This claim is unjustified.

## Didache

The title bears witness to the concept of “the twelve Apostles” as having a unique authority.<sup>145</sup>

## Summary

W Bauer comments that in early Christian literature, generally “the number twelve stands so fast that exceedingly often twelve disciples are spoken of where actually only eleven can be meant e.g. Gospel of Peter 5:9; Ascension of Isaiah 3:17; 4:3; 11:29; *Kerygma Petrou*,”<sup>146</sup> Much is said in the apocryphal Acts and Epistles of the various views and activities of the apostles after the ascension, especially of their missionary work throughout the world. Paul is not deliberately excluded from the number, but “it was only when Marcion and later Jewish Christianity began to play Paul against the earliest apostles that thought was given to the circle of apostles, and the Early Church maintained that “the twelve and Paul” qualified as apostles.”<sup>147</sup>

As regards the apostolic writings, it was probably the rise of Montanus, who advocated “the new prophecy”, that is the continuing revelation of the Holy Spirit as in apostolic times, that raised the hermeneutical question of the status of apostolic and post apostolic writings, respectively. Bray comments that “Tertullian is the first Christian writer to regard the apostolic age as definitely over, and to quote the writings of the apostles on a par with the Old Testament Scriptures as a matter of course.” He points out, however, “the fact

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<sup>145</sup> *Epistle of Barnabas*, 8:3 (n 240).

<sup>146</sup> W Bauer, *New Testament Apocryphan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 35.

<sup>147</sup> L Goppelt, *Apostolic Time* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 181.

that he could do this without argument shows that the apostolic writings must have been regarded as Scripture even before his time.”

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<sup>148</sup> G. Bray, “Authority in the Early Church”, in (London: *Churchman* Vol 95 No 1, 1981), 45.



## CONTROVERSIAL PASSAGES

There are at least two verses where the sense in which Paul is using the word “apostle” is not immediately clear but where the meaning is of vital importance given current Restorationist claims.

### 1 Corinthians 12:28

In this verse, Paul states that God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then various charismata. The verse is important because of its statement that apostles have primacy in the church, at least in some sense. Dunn has argued, “Paul refers to the particular apostles who established the church in question,” in this case “presumably Paul and Barnabas”<sup>149</sup> (1 Cor 9:6). As apostles, they provided a link not so much between the local church and other churches elsewhere (the universal church) as between the local church and the gospel.”<sup>150</sup> This interpretation has the merit of respecting the context, which speaks of the church in Corinth as “a body of Christ” (1 Cor 12:27, i.e. the emphasis is on particularity) and of stressing that the reason why apostles are first in the church is because of their key role as those who, having been commissioned by the risen Lord, are mediators of the gospel and of the authoritative tradition with it.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 275; but better, Paul and Silas (2 Cor 1:19). Barnabas was probably known to them merely by repute.

<sup>150</sup> Dunn, *Jesus* 274f, cf K S Hemphill: “The listing of individuals almost certainly would have caused the Corinthians to think concretely of persons with whom they were acquainted who were carrying out these functions”, *Pauline Concept*, 91.

<sup>151</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 275.

Hemphill, however, suggests that Dunn seems “to over emphasise the local community to the detriment of the larger Christian community.” He draws attention to an article by Schlier in which he shows that “there are repeated attempts in this letter to link the individualistic Corinthians to the whole church (1:2, 4:17, 7:17, 11:16 and 14:33).”<sup>152</sup> It may thus be suggested that it is at least arguable that the reference in 1 Corinthians 12:28 is to “apostles of Christ,” at least two of whom were involved in the planting and growth of the Corinthian church. Further light is shed on the verse by consideration of the context. Hemphill remarks that “Paul has emphasised that God organised the body in order to provide for its unity. With particular emphasis on these functionaries, Paul seems quite clearly to be saying that there is a leadership structure, which has been established in the church by God.

To fail to recognise the work of these individuals is tantamount to ignoring the will of God (14:33ff).” Moreover, “by bringing the apostles, prophets and teachers into close juxtaposition with manifestations such as gifts of healing and tongues, Paul is pointing out, much to the surprise of the spirituals, that these men too are charismatic.”<sup>153</sup> Their authority in the church is based, at least in part, on their supernatural gifting. This is the context in which the primacy of apostles must be seen. Nevertheless, whether or not Paul envisaged a continuing authoritative role for church-planting

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<sup>152</sup> Hemphill, *Pauline Concept*, 90 n 126, citing H Schlier.

<sup>153</sup> Hemphill, *Pauline Concept*, 92f.

apostles, who did not-as he did-have a special commissioning and revelation, is not clear from this verse alone.<sup>154</sup>

### **Ephesians 4:11**

This verse are crucial for a Restorationist understanding of the need for a continuing apostolic ministry. Many commentators agree that Paul envisioned this. Barth, for example, comments that “in 4.11 it is assumed that the church at all times needs the witness of “apostles” and “prophets”...Ephesians 4 does not contain the faintest hint that the charismatic character of all church ministries was restricted to a certain period of church history and was later to die out.”<sup>155</sup>

It must be confessed that this is certainly the impression that the passage gives. The main exegetical problem with this interpretation is that early in the letter, in 2:20 and 3:5, apostles and prophets or had been spoken of in a somewhat different way. In 3:5 we read that the mystery of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s people have now been revealed to Christ’s holy apostles and prophets.<sup>156</sup> It may be argued, however, that it represents Paul’s awareness that he, along with and as chief representative of other apostles and prophets (vv 3,8ff), have been favoured with a special

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<sup>154</sup> D.E. Aune, *Prophecy in Earliest Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983): “As founders of Christian communities, apostles were accorded the prestige and respect associated with the founders of various Greco-Roman social and cultural institutions (1 Cor 3:4-10; Gal 4:12-20).”

<sup>155</sup> M Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 437, cf 437 n 72, “Ephesians distinctly presupposes that living apostles and prophets are essential to the church’s life.”

<sup>156</sup> W A Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in I Corinthians* (Washington DC: University Press of American 1982), 92.

eschatological role<sup>157</sup> as recipients of divine revelation concerning the church.

This suggests that such a role may not be a continuing one. As for 2:20, Grudem comments that its nearness and similarity in content to 3:5 means that “the reader is justified in thinking that the same people are spoken of in both verses.”<sup>158</sup> An important exegetical issue is whether one should understand in 2:20 a genitive of origin, giving the reading “the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets”, or a genitive of apposition, giving the reading “the foundation consisting of the apostles and prophets.” The latter reading is by far the most natural;<sup>159</sup> the former is motivated by a desire to harmonise Ephesians 2:20 with 1 Corinthians 3:11, where the foundation is Christ himself. However, Paul is quite capable of using metaphors in two different ways.

Moreover, in Ephesians Christ is the cornerstone,<sup>160</sup> distinct from the foundation, which strongly supports the latter reading. In what sense, then, are apostles (and prophets) the foundation of the church? Schlier argues that it is through their preaching of Christ: “There is no access to Christ other than through the apostles and prophets, who have preached him and who themselves become and

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<sup>157</sup> Kruse, *Foundations*, “In Ephesians the scope of his (i.e. Paul’s) apostolic influence is extended to cosmic dimensions...Further, Paul’s apostolate is integrally related to God’s plan for the ages”, 175; Caragounis, *Mysterion*, 143: “he has a central place in the declaration of the eternally-hidden *mysterion* of eschatological import.”

<sup>158</sup> *Gift*, 92.

<sup>159</sup> It is adopted by, e.g., H Schlier, M Barth, C Masson.

<sup>160</sup> J. Jeremias, “Pace” in *TDNT* 4 (1967), 275

remain in their preaching the foundation.”<sup>161</sup> Martin similarly speaks of the “unique role of the apostles and prophets according to this verse, and argues that this foundational role should be understood” to include both their oral witness and their literary deposits in the New Testament.”<sup>162</sup> This understanding, though slanted to dogmatic considerations, is supported by the fact that in this context Paul is speaking of the universal-not the local-church.

We conclude that in both 2:20 and 3:5 the reference is to a unique role of apostles and prophets, which by definition cannot be continuing. Revelation once clearly given need not be repeated. A foundation once laid need not be re-laid. Given the restricted sense of “apostles and prophets” in 2:20 and 3:5 it is *a priori* unlikely that a wider use is present in 4:11. Consideration should also be given to the insertion of the term “evangelists” which suggests, as Robinson argues, “already the term “apostle” is becoming narrowed and confined to “the Twelve” and Paul.”<sup>163</sup> The difference in domain of meaning between “itinerant church-planters” and “evangelists” would not seem to be sufficient to warrant the introduction of a second term, if indeed apostles in the sense of “itinerant church-planters” were in view here.

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<sup>161</sup> H Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser* (Diisseldorf: Patmos, 1957) 142; translation by R P Martin.

<sup>162</sup> Martin, *Family*, 74.

<sup>163</sup> J Armitage Robinson, “Christian Ministry” in *H B Swete* (ed), *Essays* (1918). A reference to “apostles of Christ” would be more accurate than a reference to “the twelve and Paul.” We cannot be sure of the limits of the number commissioned by the risen Lord.

The argument that Paul must have had in observed a continuing ministry of living apostles in Ephesians 4:11ff is by no means conclusive.

### **The Lucan Corpus**

There are some thirty-four uses of the word “apostle” in Luke, and his writings therefore merit special treatment. More importantly, many scholars<sup>164</sup> have seen him as having a rigid view of apostleship, a view representing a late development in the use of the word and incompatibility with Paul’s position. Giles has argued<sup>165</sup> that while it is true that “Luke develops the idea that the twelve are apostles in a special sense<sup>166</sup>...it is quite untenable to argue that all this is Lukan invention.”<sup>167</sup> The merits of the respective arguments must now be assessed.

### **The Gospels**

References to apostles in the sense of the twelve appear in Luke 6:13, 9:10, 17:5, 22:14 and 24:10. A reference in Luke 11:49 to a statement of Jesus, which is part of a prophecy of judgment couched in wisdom terminology (“I will send them prophets and apostles”) is, not of primary importance. It may represent Lucan redaction of a Jewish saying whose Matthaean wording (Matt. 23:34-36) is more original. Crucial is Luke 6:13 (“he called his disciples and chose

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<sup>164</sup> Barrett, *Signs*, 52f.

<sup>165</sup> K Giles, “Is Luke an Exponent of “Early Protestantism” . . .?”, in *EQ* 55 (January 1983), 8.

<sup>166</sup> G Klein, *Die Zwölf Apostel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 203. With Luke, “For the first time the twelve are elevated to the status of apostles.” Luke, writing at the beginning of the second century, makes the twelve apostles, and hence the only legitimate bearers of the divine message, a part of his struggle against Gnosticism.

<sup>167</sup> I H Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster 1970), 505.

from them twelve, whom he named apostles”), since it is the only place in the gospels which states that Jesus used the term “apostles” for the twelve.

Roloff suggests that one should understand “whom he (later) called apostles”<sup>168</sup> i.e. (at the time of the sending of the twelve out on mission). In such a context (Luke 9:10, where Luke reproduces the substance of Mark 6:30 with his own stylistic variations), apostleship might be regarded as being a short-term affair, merely for the duration of the mission. In light of the further references to the disciples as apostles, however, it is clear that for Luke, at least, their apostleship was not a temporary matter. It is worth noting that Luke, alone among the evangelists, also records a sending-out of seventy-two disciples in addition to the twelve. Kruse has argued that in Luke 10:3 this statement, “Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves,” suggests that he regarded their “commission (sic) as applying to the troubled times that came with and immediately followed his death.”<sup>169</sup> It is interesting that this saying is used in the context of a mission-charge to the twelve in Matthew 10:16. (In Matt 10:2 the “twelve apostles” are named.)<sup>170</sup> It should be

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<sup>168</sup> J Roloff, *Apolstat-Verkündigung-Kirche* (Gütersloh: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 179.

<sup>169</sup> Kruse, *Foundations*, 33, 27f.

<sup>170</sup> This is the only verse in Matthew where the word “apostles” occurs. Elsewhere Jesus speaks of “the Twelve” (26:14, 20, 47), of the disciples (*passim*), or of “the twelve disciples” (10:1; 11:1; 20:17). The context is one of mission. Similarly, in Mark 6:30, the only occurrence in Mark of the term “apostles” (if the variant reading in Mark 3:14 is rejected), there is in the context no thought of the creation at this time of a permanent office, but rather the fulfilment of a specific commission. V. Taylor, *The Gospel, According to Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1955), 319. Therefore suggested to mean “the missionaries.”

noted that while Mark and Matthew generally restrict the word “disciple” to the twelve and never use it for a large group, Luke speaks explicitly of many disciples (e.g. Luke 6:17, 19:37). Commenting on Luke 6:12f, Giles remarks that “we thus have in Luke two separate groups who are followers of Jesus. The many “disciples” and the twelve “apostles.”<sup>171</sup> In some cases the title “apostles” is clearly due to Lucan redaction.”<sup>172</sup> The reason for this redaction becomes clear through a study of the Acts of the Apostles. It should be stressed, however, that the Lucan redaction was not arbitrary but had a basis in the tradition.

### **The Acts of the Apostles**

A brief survey of the use of the title “apostle” in the Acts reveals that, apart from Acts 14:4, 14 the title is restricted to the twelve. Indeed, in chapter one it is shown that the number *twelve* is vital. Steps are taken as a result of which Matthias is “enrolled with the eleven apostles” (1:26). The apostles emerge in the early chapters as leaders of the community active in teaching (2:42), performing miracles (2:43, 5:12), witnessing (4:33), receiving gifts (4:35ff), suffering (15:18, 40), appointing other leaders (6:6; v 2 “the twelve”), and praying that new converts might receive the Holy Spirit (8:14, 18). Apart from Peter, they remain in Jerusalem (18:1, 14, 9:27).

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<sup>171</sup> K. Giles, “Before and after Paul”, in *Churchman* 99 (1988), 243.

<sup>172</sup> E.g. in Luke 22:14 (cf Mark 14:17, Matt 26:20).



A startling fact, however, is that after 11:1 they virtually disappear from the stage, being mentioned after this point only in company with the elders of the Jerusalem church (15:2, 4, 5, 22, 23, 16:4). How should we view the function of the twelve according to the Acts? Their main function seems to be that of being a bridge between Jesus' earthly ministry and the life of the early church.<sup>173</sup> They are proof that the risen Lord is one and the same as the earthly Jesus. Hence, Luke's stress on their commission to be Jesus' witnesses (1:8): they are able to bear witness both to his earthly life (hence the qualification laid down in 1:21ff), and to his resurrection (1:23).<sup>174</sup> Witness to his earthly life is stressed in 2:22f, 5:6, and 10:37ff-witness to the reality of his resurrection in 2:32, 3:15, 4:33, 5:15, 32, 10:41, 13:31f.

The stress on the necessity for eyewitnesses fits in with Luke's introduction to his two-volume work (Luke 1:1-4), where he explicitly states his reliance on "those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses" (1:2). Giles stresses that "in Acts 4:20 (26:16) we read, in terms of common Jewish legal usage, that the apostles, as reliable witnesses, only bear witness to what they have seen and heard . . . In this role they are the guarantors of the Word which brings the Christian community into existence."<sup>175</sup> Why is the

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<sup>173</sup> J A Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 253.

<sup>174</sup> I H Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989), 43. "The apostles had to be men who had been companions of Jesus . . . This Lucan emphasis is no doubt to be explained by the necessity that those who bore testimony to the resurrection must be men who had already known Jesus and therefore were properly qualified to recognise that it was the same person who had risen from the dead."

<sup>175</sup> Giles, "Exponent", in *EQ* (Jan 1983), 7.

number of apostles limited to twelve, at least in the early chapters of Acts? It seems clear that in addition to their authenticative function, the apostles have a symbolic role.

The significance of the number *twelve* is brought out in the gospel in 22:30, where the apostles (22:14) are promised that they will “sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”<sup>176</sup> This should not be understood as an indication that Luke portrays the twelve as founding fathers of a new Israel: rather, “For Luke the twelve symbolise the fact that God in Christ is restoring Israel; to what it should be.”<sup>177</sup> The stress on the number twelve recurs in the narrative in Acts 1:21ff. “The point of the story is not that *twelve* men are needed for the task, but that the apostles must number twelve. No attempt is made to fill the place of the martyred James (Acts 12:2). Death removes James from the work but not from the number.”<sup>178</sup> It is in the light of this symbolic number that one should consider Luke’s restriction on the number of apostles.

The disappearance of the apostles from the stage in the second half of Acts must not be considered. Giles comments that “once Luke can show that the authenticity of the *kerygma* had been established, and that Israel had been reconstituted, the importance of

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<sup>176</sup> Giles *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>177</sup> J. Jervell, *Luke and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 75f, “Luke does not see the church as the new Israel”, 41-74. 146.

<sup>178</sup> See also Giles, “Exponent”, *EQ* (Jan 1983) 5; et K H Rengstorff, “the re-establishment of the apostolate of the twelve (sc. in the Matthias narrative) proves that the risen Lord, like the historical Jesus, has not given up his claim to incorporate the twelve tribes of Israel into his Kingdom”, “The Election of Matthias” in W Klassen and G F Snyder.

the twelve apostles diminishes.”<sup>179</sup> Weiser suggests a reason for this: “At the decisive turn of events, during the struggle for and the debate over the status of Gentile Christians, the principal actors are Paul on the one side and James . . . the fact that the twelve were followed by other Apostles, principally Paul, is for Luke evidence of the continuance of God’s history of salvation. The institution of the twelve has no further role in the mission among the Gentiles. According to Acts this is Paul’s role.”<sup>180</sup>

Jervell has pointed out that the role of the twelve shifts after chapter seven, where Stephen’s sermon signifies the end of the apostles’ direct missionary activity to Israel. After this point, their role is stressed on just three significant occasions. First, Acts 8:14ff connects them with Samaria (1:8). Second, the twelve legitimise Paul (9:26ff). Third, “the initial reference to “the nations”, to the peoples outside Israel (chaps 10-11) is related to Peter, who throughout Luke-Acts is reckoned as one of the twelve.”<sup>181</sup> These observations tend to support Weiser’s thesis. Giles also comments that “indeed once the twelve apostles’ basic role is exhausted, the title “apostle” is not limited solely to the twelve”<sup>182</sup> (et Acts 14:4, 14). It should be clearly understood that this assessment of the evidence is

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<sup>179</sup> Giles, “Exponent”, in *EQ* (Jan 1983) 7.

<sup>180</sup> T. Weiser, “Notes on the Meaning of the Apostolate”, in *IRM* (April 1975) 131.

<sup>181</sup> Jervell, *Luke*, 77f; cf W Hendriksen, *I and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1959), 50. Hendriksen comments, “The Twelve, by recognising Paul as having been specifically called to minister to the Gentiles, were in effect carrying out through him their calling to the Gentiles.”

<sup>182</sup> Giles, “Exponent”, in *EQ* (Jan 1983) 7.

controversial. The consensus of German scholars<sup>183</sup> is that in Acts 14:4-14, Luke is following a source, and that he understands Paul in these verses to be a missionary of the church of Antioch, not an apostle of equal standing with the twelve.

Schmithals, for example, writes that “when Luke in Acts 14:4, 14, following a source, also calls Barnabas and Paul apostles, he therewith reveals that the concept of apostle for Paul was not unknown to him, but at the same time he tendentiously makes it clear that Paul bears this title only as does Barnabas, i.e. not in the sense of a fundamental authority that authenticates all tradition and goes back to Christ himself, but in the general and relatively unimportant sense of a missionary sent out by the community at Antioch.”<sup>184</sup> Against such an argument, various points may be raised. As Gasque puts it, “it is obvious that Paul is Luke’s hero and church planting missionary par excellence.”<sup>185</sup>

Similarly, Wilson points out that Paul is equal to Peter when it comes to miracles, is called God’s “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15), and is distinguished by his suffering.<sup>186</sup> It should be recognised that Luke places great emphasis on Paul’s call and commissioning as an apostle to the Gentiles, recording it three times (9:1-19; 22:1-21;

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<sup>183</sup> Haenchen, Conzelmann and Vielhauer.

<sup>184</sup> W. Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1969), 277.

<sup>185</sup> W Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 241, n 118, criticising Haenchen.

<sup>186</sup> S G Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 116.

26:2-18), and containing the verbs *εξαποστελλω* (22:21) and *αποστελλω* (26:17) in his account of Paul's testimonies to it. Brown summarises: "In encountering the risen Christ on the Damascus Road, Paul fulfilled a basic qualification for apostleship, that of being "a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).

He did not fulfil the other condition, that of being a follower of Jesus in his earthly ministry. In short the picture that Acts paints is not that Paul was not an apostle, but that he was an apostle extraordinary which is consonant with Paul's own account (1 Cor 9:1ff; 15:5-9; Gal 1:12-17)."<sup>187</sup>

Finally, to quote Wilson, "if it was imperative for Luke to restrict the title to the twelve, it is difficult to understand why he did not omit 14:1f or at least erase the word "Apostle."<sup>188</sup> Finally, it should be recognised that Luke's major concern is not ecclesiastical office. "In reality Luke is much more concerned about tracing the growth of the church in various parts of the eastern Mediterranean world and with the spread of the Word of God through it to "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8) than in the details of church structure."<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> C Brown, *NIDNTTI*, 136, cf I H Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 35: Luke "recognises that there was a group of apostles, commissioned by Jesus, wider than the twelve, and he does not deny that Paul and Barnabas belong to this group."

<sup>188</sup> Wilson, *Gentiles*, 116.

<sup>189</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 256.

## **The Apostles of Today**

McArthur believes that like the apostles, however, their office ceased with the completion of the New Testament, just as the Old Testament prophets disappeared when that testament was completed, some 400 years before Christ. The church was established “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). Once the foundation was laid, the work of the apostles and prophets was finished.<sup>190</sup> Grudem simply states that no one is fully qualified to be an apostle, not even Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, nor Whitefield.<sup>191</sup> On the other hand, some argue for the existence and continuation of the office today since the scripture never indicates that the office had ceased. Cannistraci, for example, believes that the apostles are not to be “spiritual dinosaurs who were meant to become extinct in some kind of preordained ice age.” His contention is that no scriptural evidence is found to suggest that the apostolic office was meant to be temporary.<sup>192</sup>

Yet others have marginalised the office of apostle through what may be interpreted as a form of benign indifference. For example, Article VII of the “Bylaws of the Assemblies of God” in the United States reads:

*Section 1: Ministry Described. Christ’s gifts to the Church include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11),*

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<sup>190</sup> J. McArthur, “First Corinthians”, in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 322–24.

<sup>191</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 911.

<sup>192</sup> Cannistraci, *The Gift of Apostle*, 81.

*exhorters, administrators, leaders, and helpers (Rom 12:7-8). We understand God's call to these ministry gifts is totally within his sovereign discretion without regard to gender, race, disability, or national origin.*<sup>193</sup>

It is an undeniable fact that, in practice, many pastors and national leaders within the Assemblies today have serious reservation and difficulties in acknowledging the existence of the office today. This may be largely due to the ecclesiastical traditions that they were from, before experiencing and embracing Pentecostalism. There is a growing belief among the churches today that we are experiencing the emergence of an apostolic movement in which the Spirit of God is activating apostles and apostolic people to come together as a part of a great revival on earth. Bill Hamon, the president and founder of Christian International Network of Prophetic Ministries, predicts the coming of an "Apostolic Reformation" and the "ascension gift of the apostle" to be fully restored during this "last generation" of the church.<sup>194</sup> Cannistraci differentiates the function of an apostle and of an apostolic person today,<sup>195</sup> while Wagner provides a typical definition of an apostle today:

*The gift of apostle is the special ability that God gives to certain members...to assume and exercise general leadership over a number of churches with an extraordinary authority in spiritual matters....*

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<sup>193</sup> "Bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God" (Revised, August 10, 1993).

<sup>194</sup> Bill Hamon, *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God: God's End-Time Plans for His Church and Planet Earth* (Santa Rosa, FL: Christian International, 1997), 10, 13.

<sup>195</sup> Cannistraci, *The Gift of Apostle*, 29. In addition, Cannistraci defines "apostolic churches" to be "those that recognize and relate to these apostles and who are active in varying forms of apostolic ministry."

*They are those to whom pastors and church leaders can go for counsel and help. They are peacemakers, trouble-shooters and problem solvers. They can make demands that may sound autocratic but that are gladly accepted because people recognise the gift and the authority it carries with it. They have the overall picture in focus and are not restricted in vision to the problems of one local church.*<sup>196</sup>

In addressing the question of apostolic authority, some have dismissed the issue by describing the apostles of today to be “self-appointed apostles.” The implication here is that the so-called apostolic office has no basis in Scripture other than an unhealthy personal desire for a lofty title or for undue power. It must be pointed out that God is the One who does the appointing and recognising what He has done rests with us, the church. This is what we acknowledge in an ordination service for pastors for example—confirming publicly what God has already done in their lives. We rarely hear of pastors, described neither as being “self-appointed” nor of teachers or evangelists. While acknowledging that there might be some spurious apostles in our midst, we should not respond by throwing the function of this gift to Church.

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<sup>196</sup> Peter C. Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), 181-82.



## False Apostles

The existence of a class of missionary apostles is increased by Paul's reference to his opponents in Corinth as "false apostles" in 2 Corinthians 11:13. From chapters 10 to 13 as a whole,<sup>197</sup> we learn that the intruders claimed an apostolic authority superior to Paul's, based on the following signs: their rhetorical eloquence and impressive personal bearing, their boldness and missionary achievements, their special religious knowledge derived from extraordinary visions and revelations, and their ability to perform miracles.<sup>198</sup> In 2 Corinthians 11:13, they are described as "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." Barrett comments, "They made themselves look like (and this must include, they claimed to be) apostles of Christ when they were no such thing."<sup>199</sup> Almost certainly they were Jewish (11:22), though not necessarily Judaisers. It is unlikely that they were Jewish-Christian Gnostics "since every reference to "knowledge" in 2 Corinthians is unqualifiedly affirmative."<sup>200</sup>

Furnish's verdict that "the evidence as a whole strongly favours the view that Paul was confronting Christian missionaries whose background was, like his own, Hellenistic-Jewish"<sup>201</sup> seems

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<sup>197</sup> D A Carson, *From Triumphalism to Maturity: an Exposition of 2 Corinthians 10-13* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 4ff.

<sup>198</sup> V.P Furnish, *2 Corinthians* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 503f, *pace*, e.g., E. Kasemann, C K Barrett.

<sup>199</sup> C K Barrett, *Essays on Paul* (London: SPCK, 1982), 93.

<sup>200</sup> Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, 53.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

eminently sensible. The relationship of these missionaries with the Jerusalem church is controversial and need not detain us. In light of Galatians 2:1-10 it is inconceivable that they were, or included, members of the twelve. The fact that they could plausibly claim to be apostles in Corinth proves that the number of apostles was not definitely restricted.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Rufus Anderson, *Foreign Missions: Their Relations and Claims* (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1869), 115-116.

## APOSTOLIC PRACTICE

### **Peter Wagner's Theology**

Peter Wagner, one of the major spokesmen for this movement, sees present-day apostles having “unusual authority.” Wagner says, “Until recently the central focus of authority in our churches existed in groups, not in individuals. Trust has been placed in sessions, consistories, nominating committees, deacon boards, trustees, congregations, presbyteries, associations, general councils, cabinets, conventions, synods and the like. Rarely has trust for ultimate decision-making been given to individuals such as pastors or apostles. This, however, is changing decisively in the New Apostolic Reformation.”<sup>203</sup>

Wagner identifies several characteristics of apostles, basing his claims on a biblical assessment of the Unique Apostles we have identified above. The items he lists deserve serious consideration for present-day leaders, but I question his assumption that the apostolic authority of the Unique Apostles extends to leaders beyond the first century in the way Wagner urges. Wagner says, “Paul’s authority as an apostle came from the same sources that provide today’s apostles with their extraordinary authority.”<sup>204</sup> He lists the following:

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<sup>203</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology, Vol. III* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 165-7.

<sup>204</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 2000), 25.

### ***Apostles have a spiritual gift (charisma)***

Wagner cites the catalog of giftings found in 1 Corinthians 12, referring especially to v. 28. “Are all apostles?” Certainly not, Wagner affirms, but by implication, some in the church are apostles!<sup>205</sup> But to what kind of apostles was Paul referring? Was he speaking of the Unique Apostolate, or of specially-gifted and called ambassadors sent out as missionaries on frontier assignments-the general apostles?

### ***Apostles have an assignment-or call***

Citing 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Wagner recognises that those endowed with charismatic leadership do not all have the same ministry or sphere of activity.<sup>206</sup> I have no quarrel with Wagner on this point, except to question whether Paul was speaking here of general apostles, the missionaries of the Early Church, rather than the Unique Apostles who have special credentials.

### ***Apostles have extraordinary character***

Wagner appeals here for holding leadership in the church to a high standard.<sup>207</sup> Who would question the desire to have church leaders whose lives are above reproach? Nevertheless, Wagner does not support this high-minded desire for apostolic credentials with Scriptures that specifically single out apostles. This clearly is a matter of general concern for church leadership in any capacity.

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<sup>205</sup> Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 26.

<sup>206</sup> Wagner, 27.

<sup>207</sup> Wagner, 28.

### ***Apostles have followers***

Wagner's point here is quite pragmatic: leaders have followers. You can recognise apostles by the fact that they have a following.<sup>208</sup> This statement, of course, applies quite broadly to all leadership, even beyond the church world.

### ***Apostles have vision***

Wagner sees true apostles as leaders who have the ability to cast vision for others. He sees modern-day apostles receiving “special revelations” from God, either through direct communication from God or through prophets in the church.<sup>209</sup> Pentecostals and charismatics of today certainly should be open to receiving prophetic insights, either directly or through others in the church who may have a “word from the Lord.” However, it is not at all clear from the New Testament that this is to be limited to apostles. Perhaps what Wagner is wishing to communicate is that true apostles *regularly* exhibit such special insights from God.

### ***Apostles have determined spheres***<sup>210</sup>

To this I heartily ascribe. However, the calling of apostles (“sent ones”) to differing fields and kinds of leadership service fit nicely into the picture provided in the New Testament of general apostles, or missionaries.<sup>211</sup> The fundamental question I have for Wagner centres in his apparent blurring of the boundaries

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<sup>208</sup> Wagner, 28, 29.

<sup>209</sup> Wagner, 32-33.

<sup>210</sup> Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets*, 33-37.

<sup>211</sup> Wagner, 38, 39.

between the carefully limited authority of the Unique Apostles and all other apostles, “sent ones” or frontier missionaries. Because of this, it appears that Wagner has opened the door to serious abuses of power and authority.

### **The Theology of David Cartledge**

David Cartledge has called for an “Apostolic Revolution.” Crucial to his methodology is his call for a “Pentecostal hermeneutic.” Cartledge brushes aside not only liberal methods of biblical interpretation but castigates modern Pentecostals for submitting to the “rationalism” inherent in orthodox evangelical hermeneutics. He casts aspersions on the idea of limiting our hearing from God to the words of the Bible. Cartledge says, “A third and quite confusing hermeneutical method is that employed by many evangelicals. They insist that God only speaks to people through the Bible. At face value, this appears to be highly commendable.

However, further examination reveals that this is closer to rationalism than faith. It is actually a defence (sic) mechanism that enables them to deny anything supernatural.”<sup>212</sup> Cartledge fails to distinguish the unique apostolic authority of the Bible from all other admissible revelations—such as prophetic utterances—that are available to the church. By dismissing evangelical commitment to the authority of the written Word of God, Cartledge opens the door to a disturbing level of subjectivism. In addition, flowing out of this understanding of “continuing revelation,” he hands contemporary

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<sup>212</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 169.

church leaders, to whom he assigns the office of apostle, a kind of authority that rises above human criticism. Cartledge places these modern-day apostles within local churches.<sup>213</sup> One is inclined to suspect that any successful pastor of a large, thriving church may be included within an identifiable circle of fellow apostles-leaders whose judgments are to be followed uncritically by their respective congregations.

After all, who is going to dispute with an apostle? One wonders to whom these leaders are accountable. What checks are there for the possibility of abuse of such great power?<sup>214</sup> Cartledge points out that, in deference to the democratically oriented citizenry of his nation, the apostles in the Australian Assemblies of God are not given the title of apostle. Cartledge makes clear that the function-not the title-of apostle is critical.<sup>215</sup> A central thesis of Cartledge based on the recent history of the Assemblies of God in Australia, is that their fresh look at the biblical model of church leadership has released the churches to fresh vision, vitality, and growth. However, a preliminary opinion of the author is that creating a situation in which individual church leaders are supplied with virtually unlimited power opens the door to serious abuse. Moreover, there remains the critical issue of just how biblical is this new “restoration” model.

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<sup>213</sup> Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 169.

<sup>214</sup> Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 267.

<sup>215</sup> James Cobble, *The Church and the Powers*, (Peabody Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 91,92.

## **Summation**

It appears that the question of whether New Testament-like apostles should be restored to the modern church must begin with the issue of religious authority. Clearly, the Early Church operated under the Christ-given authority of the Unique Apostles. A case can be made for a distinction between the Unique Apostles and the ministry of others in the New Testament era—those who were called “apostles” in a more general sense—as emissaries of local churches. Although such “sent ones” carried considerable authority, it is quite clear that such authority did not reach the level of the Unique Apostles. Consequently, it is questionable whether giving the title of “apostle” to any present-day individuals is in order.

The reason for this caution is clear. To many, the title “apostle” bears the connotation of authority on a level with the Scriptures. It is helpful to learn that the Australian Assemblies of God has not felt it necessary to title their significant charismatic leaders “apostles.” They have sought to make central the concept of apostolic functions rather than supplying titles that may occasion unexpected consequences. A case may be made that, in the New Testament, those sent out from the various churches on special pioneer assignments were expected to go in the power of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic ministry was considered crucial for the development and expansion of the Early Church. There is no indication that this urgency has changed. Certainly, the church of the



twenty-first century needs leaders-called by God-to minister in apostolic power.

The Pentecostal and charismatic churches of our day need the anointing of the Holy Spirit and need to recognise and make room for those whom God has set apart for special apostolic service. This has been true from the beginning of the modern Pentecostal movement and continues to be true in our time, as well. God continues to call people to pioneer service in many fields. He is equipping humble vessels with supernatural abilities and authority-with no need for any special kind of title. It is the function, not the name that is crucial inspired at the beginning of the twentieth century with the arrival of the Pentecostal awakening. The early Pentecostals challenged the commonly accepted “cessationist” theology that dominated evangelical Christianity. They resisted the attempt of fundamentalist Protestantism to confine the supernatural work of God to the Apostolic Age.

They insisted that, in an important sense, the work of the Holy Spirit described in the Book of Acts was intended to be the model by which the vitality of the church should be measured. The early Pentecostals’ strong stance has led to the recognition by much of the contemporary church world-howbeit reluctantly-that the church must make a greater place for the supernatural dimension of Christianity, including charismatic gifts and ministries.<sup>216</sup> The rapidly changing demographics of the church disclose that charismatically

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<sup>216</sup> Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 206.

oriented Christian groups are among the fastest-growing segments of the church today. As a result, older, traditional churches must acknowledge that the churches of the future will be inclined to be apostolic in character.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). This is a major theme throughout the book.

## MODERN APOSTLES

Wayne Grudem writes:

*If any in modern times want to take the title “apostle” to themselves, they immediately raise the suspicion that they may be motivated by inappropriate pride and desires for self-exaltation, along with excessive ambition and a desire for much more authority in the church than any one person should rightfully have.*<sup>218</sup>

The Pentecostal scholar Vinson Synan adds, “Most people in church history who have claimed to be new apostles have been branded as heretics and excommunicated from the church.”<sup>219</sup> The resentment and conflict on the issue is due in part to the difficulty of clearly defining the nature and function of these modern-day apostles. David Cannistraci asks a pointed question: “To escape the discomfort of the actual term ‘apostle,’ have we arbitrarily retired it and replaced it with the more sanitary title of ‘missionary’ (a term not found in Scripture)?”<sup>220</sup> This is certainly an interesting point raised by Cannistraci that may well be true.

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<sup>218</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 911.

<sup>219</sup> Vinson Synan, “Who Are the Modern Apostles?” in *Ministries Today*, March-April, 1992, pp. 42-47 (45).

<sup>220</sup> David Cannistraci, *The Gift of Apostle: A Biblical Look at Apostleship and How God Is Using It to Bless His Church Today* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1996), 78.

## “Foundational Apostles”

The various people below claim to be foundational Apostles to the modern church.

### C. Peter Wagner

Wagner believes that,

*“Apostles and prophets the foundation of the Church and, identify as James an apostle as my function as a horizontal apostle to bring together the people of the body of Christ not only can I do it, I love to do it. Yesterday I was the apostle with a group of about 15-20 prophets we met all day long, and these prophets many of whom are going to be speakers in this conference come under my guidance, coordination and leadership as an apostle. They each have apostles in their own networks but I mean they are under spiritually. But I’m the one that brings them together and when “I” bring them together things happen.”<sup>221</sup>*

In Wagner's book, *Apostles of the City: How to Mobilise the Territorial Apostles for City Transformation*, he attempts to describe what the local role of these apostles might be. He defines Apostles to the City as those

*“whom the Holy Spirit gives an anointing for extraordinary authority in spiritual matters over the other Christian leaders in the same city.” While not excluding others, Wagner hypothesises that the most extensive pool for identifying apostles of the city is among the mega churches.<sup>222</sup>*

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<sup>221</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *National School of the Prophets* (Mobilizing the Prophetic Office, Colorado Springs, CO, May 11, 2002,), Tape #1.

<sup>222</sup> Orell Steinkamp, “The Apostles Are Coming To Your City, Ready or Not” in *The Plumblin*, Vol. 6, No. 2, March/April 2001.

In the brochure advertising C. Peter Wagner's conference in Brisbane, the following was written:

*"The New Apostolic Reformation is an extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit that is changing the shape of Christianity globally. It is truly a new day! The Church is changing. New names! New methods! New worship expressions! The Lord is establishing the foundations of the Church for the new millennium. This foundation is built upon apostles and prophets. Apostles execute and establish God's plan on the earth. The time to convene a conference of the different apostolic prophetic streams across this nation is now! This conference will cause the Body to understand God's 'new' order for this coming era."*<sup>223</sup>

### **Tommi Femrite**

Femrite states, *"It is time for the apostolic leaders of nations to rise up and proclaim into the heavenlies of the nations where they have apostolic voice and authority to speak and legislate in the heavenlies."*<sup>224</sup>

### **Bill Hamon**

At the National Symposium on the Post-Denominational Church, May 21-23, 1996. Bill Hamon said,

*"this was a historical occasion in God's annals of Church history. It was prophetically orchestrated by the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's progressive purposes of bringing His church to its ultimate destiny. . . the consensus of the panelists was that there are still apostles and prophets in the Church, and*

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<sup>223</sup> Peter Wagner and Ben Gray, (Brochure For Brisbane 2000, as cited in *Jumping On The Bandwagon - Australian Christian Churches Seduced by the Beat of a Different Drummer?*, Hughie Seaborn, 1999, <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~rseaborn/bandwagon.html>)

<sup>224</sup> Tommi Femrite (9-12-01), cited in September 14th, 2001, Open Memorandum Addressing the Twin Towers War, From: C. Peter Wagner, Presiding Apostle, International Coalition of Apostles, Colorado Springs,

*there is an emerging Apostolic Movement that will revolutionize the 21st Century Church.*"<sup>225</sup>

## **Paul Cain**

Cain states that,

*"No prophet or apostle who ever lived equalled the power of these individuals in this great army of the Lord in these last days. No one ever had it, not even Elijah or Peter or Paul, or anyone else enjoyed the power that is going to rest on this great army."*<sup>226</sup>

## **Jack Deere**

Jack Deere says that with the third wave would come end time apostles and prophets who would *"do greater works than the apostles, than Jesus, or any other Old Testament prophets."*<sup>227</sup>

## **Rod Parsley**

*On the program, Parsley appealed to the Hicks "prophecy" and added the twist that we are not to look to the Book of Acts, but to a far greater, future day of miracles. Parsley's claim is that there is an end-time Church coming greater than the Church of the Apostles, which will routinely heal the sick and raise the dead."*<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> *Streams, Rivers, Floods, Avalanches*, cited by Jewel van der Merwe, *Discernment Ministries Newsletter*, <http://www.discernment-ministries.com/Articles/streams.htm>

<sup>226</sup> Bob Jones and Paul Cain *"Selections from the Kansas City Prophets,"* audiotape (tape: 155C)

<sup>227</sup> Jack Deere, *"Intimacy With God and the End Time Church,"* Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Denver, CO, 1989, audiotape (session 2A)

<sup>228</sup> Rod Parsley, *The Raging Prophet "Breaking Through"* His Unorthodox Doctrine and Practice by G. Richard Fisher, <http://www.pfo.org/parsley.htm>

## **Rick Joyner**

Rick Joyner on the subject of the latter-day apostles and prophets who will be greater than the apostles and prophets of Biblical times:

*"In the near future we will not be looking back at the early church with envy because of the great exploits of those days, but all will be saying that He certainly did save His best wine for last. The most glorious times in all of history have not come upon us. You, who have dreamed of one day being able to talk with Peter, John and Paul, are going to be surprised to find that they have all been waiting to talk to you."*<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Rick Joyner, *The Harvest* (Pineville, NC, MorningStar, 1990), 9.

## **THE BIBLICAL VERSUS MODERN MODEL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT**

Some feel that the problem with the church is that there is? no apostolic and prophetic leadership. The laity needs to be held more accountable. The church is floundering for lack of leadership, vision, and authority.<sup>230</sup> So to fill that need, apostles and prophets are springing up around the world with Wagner as the “chief apostle.” It is time to get organised according to true Biblical principals, states Wagner. He claims that the reason for the success of the early church was that it had a foundation: apostles first and prophets second. Today, there is no foundation to build upon.<sup>231</sup> Wagner believes there have been apostles and prophets down through church history-visionary leaders such as Martin Luther-but they simply were not recognised as such.

The present-day church has been founded upon teachers and administrators ever since the sermon became the focal point of the worship service; therefore, there is no leadership or vision.<sup>232</sup> He quotes George Barna, Christian researcher and pollster as saying, “As long as the Church persists in being led by teachers, it will flounder. Identifying, developing, deploying and supporting gifted leaders will renew the vision, energy and impact of the Church.”<sup>233</sup> In “*Churchquake!*” his 71,000-word textbook, he claims the “New

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<sup>230</sup> Proponents of the New Apostolic Reformation and Restorationists

<sup>231</sup> C.P. Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets, the Foundation of the Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000), 8.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 11.



Apostolic Reformation” will be as revolutionary and earth shattering as Martin Luther’s. Wagner is a great proponent of meta churches and cell churches. He embodies the merging of the “church growth movement,” cell churches, the “New Apostolic Reformation,” and the dominion theology of “kingdom now.” He is very prolific and wrote another titled *Apostles of the City: How to Mobilise Territorial Apostles for City Transformation*, in which he describes the organisation of the apostles.

Trans-local apostles are over the pastors who are over the people, being accountable to one another going up the hierarchy. Wagner believes that a visionary apostolic leader is needed to oversee a move of God. Wagner and other proponents believe that the apostles and prophets will lead the body of Christ in establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. These “apostles” will lead the church into have dominion over the earth. In the book entitled, *“Moving in the Apostolic,”* by John Eckhardt with the foreword by C. Peter Wagner. He puts forth the following four premises:

1. The Church has been given a commission.
2. This commission is an apostolic commission.
3. This commission must and will be fulfilled.
4. Since the commission is apostolic, it will take an apostolic anointing to fulfil it.<sup>234</sup>

He claims that the Holy Spirit is an apostolic Spirit and only an “apostolic church” can fulfil the Great Commission.<sup>235</sup> He claims that apostles are officers of the Church and “an officer is an executive,

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<sup>234</sup> John Eckhardt, *Moving in the Apostolic* (Ventura: Renew Books, 1999), 21.

<sup>235</sup> C.P. Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets, the Foundation of the Church*, 24

and executives have the authority to execute commissions.”<sup>236</sup> It is an affront to the Body of Christ-the true church-to say that apostles can only fulfil the Great Commission. Nevertheless, he goes on to mention that “Strongholds are major hindrances to the advancement of the Church and must be dealt with apostolically.”<sup>237</sup> He claims these are only destroyed through apostolic ministry. He states, “Although every believer has rank to cast out devils, apostles walk and minister in the highest rank. Evil spirits and angles recognise this rank. Apostles are the spiritual commanders of the Church.”<sup>238</sup> He goes on to claim that only the apostle has the authority to execute the plans and purposes of God: “These are the military generals and commanders who will mobilise the people of God...”<sup>239</sup>

The apostles and prophets movement ties in with “territorial spirits,” spiritual mapping, cell churches, the church growth movement, etc. For them, there is a hierarchy with apostles over several cities, and pastors act as super-eldership over a single city. It seems that this is not a “new” movement, for it is similar to the Roman Catholic Church. There is more to the agenda than just organisation. Their goal is conquest. Liberal Protestant Churches such as the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, etc. have always been “a-” or “post- millenarian” (i.e. meaning that they do not expect Christ to come and reign a thousand years; it is the

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid ,63.

<sup>239</sup> C.P. Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets, the Foundation of the Church* , 65

church's job to bring God's kingdom to earth), holding a position not unlike the Roman Catholic Church. All of these different branches—from the Roman Catholic Church, to the liberal Protestant, to the Charismatic Churches of the Apostles, and Prophets Movement—come together with the goal of overtaking political and social institutions.

### **Analysis**

Early in history, the church got off track and went the way of the world with clergy, buildings, and all; but in the beginning, it was not so. In the days of the Old Testament, people needed leaders and heroes like David and Sampson, but not so in the New Testament period. We all have equal access to God and can go boldly before the throne of God. We are like a vine—not a tree—for every born-again believer is plugged into the vine. However to create a New Testament hierarchal model is going back into the Old Covenant, for they are reinstating the Priest but calling them “apostles” and “prophets.” We may as well just all become Roman Catholics, for where the laity lost all touch with God and had to go through a priest. Today's apostate church uses the world's corporate or military model. The “church” of titles, ranks, and job descriptions is from the world—not the Lord.

Man is not the head of the church; Jesus is. There is only one head to the body, and all instructions are issued from the head. They do not flow down through the body for every part of the body has a direct connection to the head. The world needs hierarchy and

outward control. Jesus said, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28).

Jesus repeats this in Luke 22:25-27; the Gentile world operates on the basis of a chain-of-command. Authority is based on position and rank. Leaders measure their greatness by power, influence, and prominence. In the kingdom of God, the greatest is least and the least the greatest. The ruler is the one who serves the most. God’s way is the absolute opposite of the world’s way. The New Testament path is where we have a people controlled by the indwelling Spirit. Satan and the world always need hierarchy-not so in the body of Christ. Nevertheless, what about religious authority? Are we not supposed to revere and respect religious leaders? Jesus said,

*But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven, neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matthew 23:8-12).*

In the Jewish and apostate Christian world, there are religious leaders with titles – Rabbi, Pastor, Bishop, Priest, Reverend, Father, etc-but it should not be so among us. We are merely brothers and sisters in Christ, each gifted and functioning in His body. Elders oversee. None of them “lord it over” the flock. We are all equals with different functions (1Cor 12:25-26).

### **Offices or Functions?**

The early church did not have a person who was the Chief Executive Officer who directed the staff, preached on Sundays and conducted weddings, funerals, and Eucharistic services, and performed psychological counselling. This is an extra-Biblical carry-over from the Roman Catholic Church. Now-if the Wagner’s have their way- we will have another hierarchy of apostles paralleling Rome. There is no such figurehead in the church. It is this very clergy/laity organisation that has had such a crippling effect on the saints.

The saints themselves should be shepherding, overseeing, and teaching-not some “professional” who has advanced post-graduate education in church growth, management, organisation, creator of programs, exegesis of the Word, and chief cook. There is no such thing in the New Testament as an elder-driven, board-driven, or pastor-led church. The church is simply brothers and sisters in Christ meeting together and ministering to one another. I Corinthians 12:28 does not describe an organisational hierarchy when he writes, “and God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second

prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.”

He describes logical functions: the one who gives birth to the church (the apostle), the one who imparts vision (the prophet), the one who lays the Biblical foundation (the teacher) and so on. When describing characteristics of elders or deacons, Paul is talking about qualities of a person functioning in that capacity-not qualifications for an office. A brother or sister functions in a group because he has been dealt with and refined by the daily working of the Holy Spirit. Others recognise their gift, their experience, and their authority in certain matters. But, these are gifts and functions – not offices held. Their legitimacy is recognised by others because of their “servanthood” and their fruit-not because they were elected or appointed to office.

### **Accountability**

In the Old Testament and in the world, authority depends upon position. One respects and cedes to the authority of another person because of their higher position. Many Churches today would have everyone in an organisation chart where everyone is over someone else. In the case of the “apostles and prophets” movement, an apostle would be over the pastors of a city, who preside over congregations and the flow of authority would go down through the pastoral staff or elders, deacons, cell group leaders, etc for every single person should be under someone.

There is a Biblical form of subjection to authority, but it is not in this way. It is an attitude of mutual submission—a voluntary attitude led by the Holy Spirit. There is only one “head” and authority in the Church, and that is Jesus Christ (John 17:2). As we submit to Him, He may have us submit to others – a mutual subjection but not a subjection that is insisted upon because of someone’s position. That is the way of the world. He is very clear in the verses above, “let it not be so among you”(Matt. 20:26). The Bible does not teach that believers have authority over other believers. This type of authority is condemned in the church. “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called “Benefactors.” But no so with you, but let him who is greatest among you become the youngest, and the leader as the servant”(Luke 22:25-26).

Divine authority is not conferred, inherited, ordained, or claimed by men, including the self-appointed apostles. Divine authority is exercised by a person who is acting in the Spirit but it is not intrinsic or positional authority. It cannot be imposed upon people. It is recognised and accepted because of the working of the Spirit in the body of Christ. It derives from the Head and is recognised by others as coming from the head because it is earned rather than absolute and positional. Christ’s authority flows through the mature Christian and others recognise the merit and worth of that authority. Divine authority is never in a hierarchy nor found in an office or position. Its source is the indwelling Spirit. The kind of

accountability in vogue today is not Biblical and is often the excuse for a “fishing expedition” into the intimate details of a person’s life—from sexual matters, to finance, to conformity, to the unwritten rules, and mores of the “Church,” cell or accountability group.

“Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day” (Colossians 2:16). “Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother ...but who are you to judge your neighbour?” (James 4:11-12). “At the same time they also learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention” (I Tim 5:13). Mutual subjection does not give one another the right to probe. We are to love one another not meddle, control, or adjust. Christians properly built and knitted together in the Spirit will automatically open and share things as the Spirit leads and directs. We are likened to a family—not a corporation or an army. We are an organism—not an organisation. A family fosters a loving and supportive environment—not the tyranny of accountability. Each local church or assembly is like a family. It is independent-self-governing, with Christ as the head. There is no hierarchy of churches; there are no apostles overseeing a city. There is no idea of submitting to someone for a “covering.”



## **Synthesis**

There is something particularly seductive about the apostles and prophets movement. It sounds “properly” anti-establishment and has the flavour and allure of a truly New Testament “early church” solution to the deadness and stultifying nature of the traditional institutional church, especially when combined with a “Meta Church” zeal for the gospel or the “Cell Church” model which promises the intimacy and opportunity of the free wheeling house church. But in the end, it leads one into an even greater apostasy—an informal system of brainwashing, peer pressure, and control. It becomes a well-oiled hierarchy that is militant and tightly governed. The web of the Meta churches, cell churches, apostles, and prophets is all interconnected. These are the leaders of apostate Christianity.

These apostles and prophets do not want to simply establish themselves as self-styled leaders. It is to bring the kingdom of God to the earth. It is dominion teaching; they see a way to bring that dominion through an alliance with a government that seems to share their agenda—with a country that seems to have a “manifest destiny” and calling by God to bless the nations of the earth. As this movement builds momentum and many churches adopt such teaching the Biblical centred churches will again be persecuted. However, this time not from the World but from the “church.”

## CONCLUSION

The old but still widely-held understanding of the term “apostle” restricts this ministry to a few persons in the first century. As the twelve plus Paul were appointed by the risen Christ as uniquely authoritative teachers and evangelists, they are not models for others to follow-except in the broadest sense. The new and more accurate understanding, on the other hand, allows the Bible to speak more directly and much more applicably to the contemporary situation. It is true that the twelve held a unique, one-for-all role as the authenticating witnesses of the Word which brought the post-Pentecost Church into existence but the Gospels also showed that the twelve were first and foremost-as far as Jesus was concerned in his lifetime-disciples.

They were his closest companions whom he taught and trained and who formed the nucleus of the first community in which Jesus was Lord. The twelve therefore are not to be seen simply as an interesting group who belong to the past but rather as a model for discipleship and church membership for all time. Though dead, they still speak. The Gospel writers record the numerous stories about the disciples, not as historians with a rove for the past, but as evangelists who wanted the past to speak contemporaneously. They wanted men and women who read what they had written to hear afresh the call to become a disciple and to see in the disciples something of what discipleship will always mean.<sup>240</sup> Paul was the last to have seen the

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<sup>240</sup> It is of interest to note that Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 206, 213, writing from within the Roman Catholic tradition also argues that we

risen Jesus (1 Cor. 15:8) and he was personally commissioned for a specific task (Acts 9:15, 22:21; Gal. 16). But as we have seen, Paul gladly called others by the title “apostle.” We have concluded that these people involved in pioneer evangelism in the Hellenistic world. Some of those mentioned-or all of them-had not seen the risen Christ.

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need to encourage and recognise the ministry of apostle, in this wider sense of the term, in the church today.

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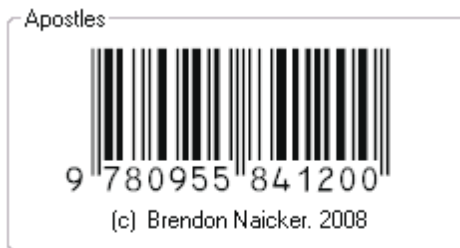
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